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THE CHURCH A FAMILY:

TWELVE SERMONS

ON THE

OCCASIONAL SERVICES OF THE PRAYER-BOOK.

PREACHED IN THE

CHAPEL OF LINCOLN'S INN,

BY

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THE first of these Sermons explains the object of the rest. They would have needed no other preface if I had not felt anxious to shew how they are connected with the question which is occupying us all at this moment.

There are some Clergymen who look upon the vehement excitement which has been produced by the late Papal movement with unmixed pleasure; there are some who regard it only with fear and suspicion. The first think that the English people are manifesting a greater enthusiasm for their own Episcopate than they have ever manifested before; or that they are awaking to a more keen sense of the radical evils of Popery; or that they are more strongly alive to the importance of the principles which were asserted at the Reformation. The others say that the only feeling really at work is a National feeling; that the Queen's Supremacy is the one watchword



which calls forth any response; that there is at least as much danger as benefit to the Church, and even to English liberty, in the loud proclamation of that watchword.

I agree with those who make these last statements, that the movement is entirely a national one; that neither the ecclesiastical nor the theological question occupies more than a very subordinate place indeed in the minds of those who are exclaiming against Papal aggression. But I apprehend, a national feeling may be a very noble and a very godly one. It seems to me that the godliness of England has always depended, and must always depend greatly, on the preservation of its nationality; that the moment we lose it, we shall become the most immoral and godless people on the face of the earth. Nor I think can this national godliness be separated from the assertion of the Sovereign's Supremacy. In so far as that Supremacy has been the protest of the nation against foreign jurisdiction and a mortal ruler, in so far has it been the witness that God is the real ruler of the land, and that the Sovereign has an actual, not a nominal, a direct, not an indirect, responsibility to him. Through all periods of our history

this conviction has worked mightily in the minds of Englishmen. It has been hidden under many party notions and theories in the minds of cultivated men, it has been mixed with many superstitions, much ignorance and much ferocity in the minds of the common people. But it has been the secret strength of both; it has prevented the sins of both from becoming our ruin. A grand theocratic feeling has exhibited itself in the thoughts and acts of Tories and Whigs, of Churchmen and Dissenters; it often breaks forth through the Radical's proclamation of the sovereignty of the people. The assurance that there is a righteous Ruler over the land somewhere is not dead in the mind of any professed English infidel as long as he retains any portion of his native sympathies.

But yet it is true that the doctrine of Royal Supremacy has in every age of our history had its reverse side. Dissenters feel, High-churchmen feel, that it has become and is capable of becoming a gross tyranny, an assertion of dominion over the Church and over that which is spiritual in man, which ought not to be borne. When such blessings and such curses are contained in it, we cannot merely



fix limits to its exercise. There must be a kind of supremacy which is morally beneficial, and a kind which is morally mischievous. All of us feel that there is. Few Protestants doubt that it was a morally mischievous exercise of Henry the Eighth's supremacy to originate the Six Acts. No English Dissenter, no Presbyterian, I hope and believe comparatively few Episcopilians, doubt that it was a morally mischievous exercise of Charles the First's supremacy to force Bishops and a Liturgy upon Scotland. On the other hand, all the greatness of Elizabeth's reign may surely be traced to the feeling, that the Queen was the representative of national distinctness and national godliness, in opposition to earthly or spiritual, Spanish or Romish invasions. Wherein lies the difference? Precisely in this I conceive, that in the one case the monarch was going out of his way to legislate for the Church or to fight for the Church, in the other case the monarch was in her place, maintaining her own trust and calling as the divinely appointed head of the nation. Of course I disapprove of the particular decrees which Henry put forth; of course I think Episcopacy a right and divine ordinance. But I conceive

Henry's sin consisted in issuing decrees at all, Charles's sin, or the sin of his ecclesiastical advisers, in supposing that it was his business to use the secular arm for the establishment of an ordinance, which was nothing if it had not a wholly spiritual ground and meaning. The effect in each case was self-destructive. As the supremacy in Elizabeth's hands called forth a feeling in the whole nation, which was mightier for resisting enemies than all decrees and legislation could possibly be, so the acts of Henry and of Charles divided the nation; still more enfeebled and crippled the Church.

I hope this consideration may be some justification for those who heartily rejoice that a strong feeling of reverence for the Queen's Supremacy should have been awakened in the minds of their countrymen, and yet who would not for the world join in an address or a petition praying that the Supremacy should be exerted, or any legislative measure adopted for the purpose of putting down a pseudo-prelacy—I should be almost ashamed to add, if the notion had not been publicly broached and received with applause, —for the purpose of re-enacting penal laws



against Romanists. By calling for such measures, we shall surely in the first place destroy that united national feeling which has been evoked; we shall lead men to think that we want the help of swords against a rival sect because it is too strong for us; we shall find ourselves speedily deserted by those who, for the sake of a little temporary popularity, have been willing to mix their shouts with ours; and when the current of feeling has turned, will be just as ready to denounce us as foes to religious liberty. We shall turn the Queen's Supremacy into an exercise of mere Cabinet Supremacy, in which there is nothing national or godly at all; we shall have the usual penalty of future slavery to pay for the ignominy of asking the help of Statesmen to do a work which, if we are what we pretend to be, we should do for ourselves.

But how should we do it? In what way are we as Churchmen to resist what we feel to be an aggression upon our own position? Are we to bring forth the arguments which prove that our Orders are valid, that we have a right to the jurisdiction which the Pope would deprive us of? I think we must know tolerably well by this time that we shall not

be listened to if we do. Englishmen never cared much about these arguments; in a time of popular excitement they care less for them than ever. They denounce us as pedants when we produce them, they laugh at our mixture of craft and simplicity in seeking to introduce our theories of Episcopacy under cover of a cry which has not the remotest connexion with them. Some persons, no doubt, may think that it is a duty to go on bringing their proofs and establishing their conclusions when the ears and hearts of men are indifferent to both; those who believe that God is governing His Church may feel reverently that these are signs of His will which are not to be disregarded.

But are there not tokens of another kind, very clear proofs that God does mean us to think about our Episcopate, now more earnestly than ever? When the whole of this papal movement is manifestly directed against *that*, are we to be indifferent about it? I think certainly not. I should wish to consider very earnestly what our Episcopacy is, and why it has been given us. I should wish to enquire how it may be defended, by considering how it is assailed. The Romanists do not come



to us with a great many arguments from tradition to prove the validity of their orders. They say boldly, ‘Here are a number of spiritual Fathers set over you by the great spiritual Father.’ I know no answer that we can make but this, ‘We have a number of spiritual Fathers set over us by *the* great spiritual Father; not Fathers by the Pope’s appointment, but Fathers in God.’ Now if we do not only make this assertion in words, but try to bring it out in acts; if we begin to look upon our Bishops more really as fathers, and they begin to regard themselves more really in that character; if without any pretence to a jurisdiction which they have not, they shew that they look upon the whole land as God’s family, and themselves as set to watch over it by Him—most eager to acknowledge the Queen as their sovereign, most ready to do her homage, thankful for their national position, determined not to make themselves separate in any wise from the other citizens of the land—but feeling at the same time that their spiritual powers are not derived from the Queen, are not tied down to state formalities, are of a much more domestic and universal character than those of a Sovereign can ever be; if it is

seen clearly that the accidental state distinctions which appertain to this office and connect it with the general economy of the nation, are quite subordinate in their estimation, if we shew that they are so in ours, to the office itself; then I do not believe we shall any longer find our countrymen dull or indifferent listeners when the word Episcopacy is uttered in our pulpits or in our common conversation. For they crave such an oversight as this, they want a paternal loving rule, they feel that no police, and no parliament elected by household or universal suffrage can supply the place of it; they feel that such a power should be a Divine power, and should have a Divine warrant to sustain it; they say, ‘Be not always talking to us about it, but let it come forth and manifest itself to us.’ I am not sure that they will turn to Rome to look for it if we do not provide it. They may do worse; they may despair of all Churches, and may establish societies in which there is no spiritual element. But assuredly if we seek to banish the Romish bishops from our shores, instead of striving to shew that ours are more truly bishops than theirs, we shall leave a suspicion on men’s minds that we have no



trust in our own truth, that we think the Pope's fatherhood is the true Fatherhood after all.

What I have said upon this point applies also to that other and even more difficult question, How may we best comply with the direction which has been given us by an authority to which we all owe dutiful submission, that we should in our pulpits enter into the Romish controversy, and expose the falsehoods of the Romish system? That there are ways of apparently obeying this command which would be very distressing and offensive to the person who gave it, we must all be aware. We might, for instance, be inclined to deliver sermons against the miracles and other impostures of Romanism. The subject is a tempting one; it seems to appeal to the love of truth in the English mind. But after the warning which has lately been given us against the rationalistic and germanizing temper, we cannot forget that this was precisely the way in which Ronge began that feeble, vain, heartless reformation, which only served to call out and foster all the negative tendencies of the German mind, which became every day more thin, more helpless, more rationalizing,

till it was absorbed into the vortex of the political revolution, and after a few years' existence was lost out of sight altogether. The English public, it may be said, have not the same readiness for evil; they can listen to mere attacks upon that which is counterfeit, without losing their reverence for that which is true. Perhaps so. But when the words 'No Virgin Mary,' and 'No forgiveness of sins,' are seen written upon our walls, Clergymen may think a little before they fill whole Sermons with specimens of Mariolatry, or with the perversions of the confessional.

And even when sermons against popery take a more general and lofty character than this, when they assert in broad and vehement language the doctrines of the Reformation, and prove the Pope to be Antichrist, are the faces of the congregation, as they leave the Church, such as to encourage a Clergyman to repeat the experiment? Much praise he may no doubt hear of himself: '*How fine that passage was. How that person in the next pew must have felt it. Well, thank God England is sound at heart.*' But will he see any humiliation for individual or national sins, any of the effects which we should look for from a



Gospel that is to lift up the humble and cast the proud down to the ground? Men thoroughly convinced who were convinced before,—men who are comfortable in their sins and their pharisaism made more comfortable,—a few listless doubters, who had begun to tamper with Romanism, strengthened in their doubts or urged to a sudden resolve,—a few earnest thinkers who are struggling with difficulties which they cannot master, and longing for sympathy, led to believe that they can hear nothing but cold and bitter words in English churches, and urged to embrace that which they still almost hate: these are the fruits of those popular denunciations which win for men the epithets of courageous and uncompromising from newspapers and saloons.

Surely any line of argument which leads us to apologize for ourselves, to forget our sins, to think that things are right with us, must be a deadly one. But are we obliged to take this course in contending with Romanism? May we not take just the opposite? May we not say, ‘We have sinned deeply, foully against God; we have broken the unity of His Church; we are a divided, self-seeking people, we have bowed down to Mammon, and not to

God. And now what cure do you propose to us for all these evils? It must be a very radical one; it must go down to the very depths of our society. Archbishop of Westminster, Father of the Oratorians, tell us what it is!’ They answer at once, ‘Submit yourselves to the Bishop of Rome: then all is right with you. The comet is restored to its place in the system; you move again round the divine Sun.’ Shall we indeed? Let us understand your words thoroughly. But first, who are you who speak them? Are you not the persons who told us last summer that we were convicted heretics, because a Clergyman was permitted to remain among us who said that we were not really made children of God in baptism? We are heretics for tolerating the belief that we are *not* this? You mean then that we are *this*? And yet you do not say ‘Repent, and turn to God, and confess that you have not lived as His children.’ You do not exhort us to *that*, but you exhort us to become the Pope’s children, to repent of not having acknowledged him as our father, henceforth to take him as our father. Now we understand one another. This is what constitutes the difference between a godly and an



ungodly people. This is what gives the one people the right to anathematize, and makes the other people the lawful subject of their anathemas.

Friends and brothers! who are flying to Rome because you cannot bear our disunions, because you see that we are pretending to be a Christian family and that we are not one, listen to this! Thank God you have not lost your English love of reality yet! Thank God you would not let us filch it from you when we tried to make you contented with the miserable state of things around you! This is the way in which you are to defend your faith in the reality of baptism! This is the way in which you and your nation are to be made more orthodox and Catholic!

Will you be satisfied with this skin-deep reformation for yourselves, for England, for mankind? If you believe in the truth of baptism, can you not find out for them and for yourselves a more excellent way? Can you not say to them, 'Let us arise and go to our Father; let us say, We have sinned against Heaven and before thee.' If you cannot say this, if you cannot exhort others to say it, what right have you to charge any with not

believing the words of the Catechism? *You* do not believe them, *you* dare not act upon them, *you* proclaim them to be idle tales.

But if you do believe them, what a foundation there is for unity at home, for unity with all nations; a unity which Pius IX. cannot give, and which, thanks be to God, he cannot take away! First of all, we may carry this message into every den and hovel where men are living like beasts, and in a way to become devils. We may tell them that they have been claimed as members of a redeemed family, that the Father of that family is seeking to bring them home. We may strive to carry this principle of a family into every relation of society, to shew that it is no more a dream or a falsehood now than it was 1800 years ago. And then when we have preached this Gospel at home, we may preach it abroad. We have been invaded here because men are always glad to carry a war into a foreign country where they know how insecure every thing is in their own. England is said to be ripe for conversion; how stands the case with Italy? It may be that if a voice is heard there proclaiming, not that an Anglican bishop has come to seize a jurisdiction which is not



his, but that Italian bishops are fathers in God, and not fathers under the Pope—that Italian men and women may take up the position which their sponsors took up for them in baptism, and act as if they were members of that universal family of which Latins and Greeks are members together under a Divine head; it may be, I say, that a freedom will begin in that land which no political revolution has been able to achieve for it, and which no French swords can wrest from it.

In some such way may Christendom become again a Christendom indeed. In some such way may England even yet, in spite of all her sins, be the appointed emancipator of the nations. But however this may be, the moment seems come when this truth of a universal family must be declared everywhere, whether men will listen to it, or turn away from it. The time seems come when the question between us and the Romanists must take this form, ‘Is God or the Pope the Father of the universal family?’ I would earnestly beseech English Clergymen to believe that this is the issue to which all things are tending, that the crisis at which we are arrived signifies nothing less. For if they

have this conviction they will, I am sure, approach the subject with deep solemnity. They will hope nothing from statesmen or parliaments or mobs. Their hope will be in the Lord who hath made Heaven and earth.

*November, 1850.*



## SERMON I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

#### THE SERVANT AND THE SON.

#### HEBREWS III. 5, 6.

*And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a Son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.*

IN the verse immediately preceding these, it is said, ‘Every house is builded by some man; but He that built all things is God.’ In these words an ordinary, material house, the work of some human architect, seems to be compared with the great universe of God. No doubt that thought was present to the writer’s mind. He did remember that the creative power which is exerted in every contrivance of mortal wit, in every work of mortal hands, presupposes a mightier creative power of which it is the image, from which it is derived. Follow out the thought of any building through the hands which constructed it to the mind which devised and suggested it, and you come at last to the Mind which divided the light from the darkness, and the firm land from the waters. But



if the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews dwelt for a moment on this reflection, he passed rapidly to another. The word 'house' does not only call up associations of timber and stones, of ground-plans and orders; it also reminds every man of the household: Economy is the management not of the walls, but of the society which dwells within them. To build up a house, in common speech, and I believe in the Apostle's speech, is to build up a Family.

In this sense I conceive he affirms, that every house is builded by some man, but He that built all things is God. Each family has some founder; some person to whom it refers its origin, or of whom it boasts as the great builder up of its fortunes. The members of that family feel that their connexion with it is more precious to them in all ways than their connexion with the material goods or grounds which they possess. They delight, if possible, to speak of those goods or grounds as an inheritance. If they have purchased them, they trust that they will be an inheritance to those who come after. Just in proportion as they are human and not merely animal, just in that proportion is their feeling respecting their ancestors, near or remote, respecting the children who climb their knees, or those who shall proceed from them, a deeper and stronger feeling than that which binds them to the productions of the soil or to the soil itself. The existence of this family feeling has been the ground of national life, and the preservation of it. All wise legislators and moralists

have desired to cultivate it: in any causes which threatened its destruction, they have seen the sure presages of ruin to laws, manners, individual greatness, social order.

But if this family order is of such immense significance, are we to suppose that it has no foundation, like that which all the creations of man have, in the creative Word of God? Is there no universal family which is implied in the existence of all particular families, as the order of nature is implied in each building that is raised by mortal hands? Can we not say of *this* family, that whereas each particular family is founded by some man, it is founded by God?

The Jew met such an assertion with a startling objection. 'One particular family,' he said, 'was founded by God. Moses, the great builder up of its fortunes, he who delivered it and formed it into a nation, was a divine legislator. God was his teacher, he spoke God's words, he uttered God's decrees. And yet his object was to separate us from all the families of the earth. Because he called us out to be God's people, he called us to be a separate people. Here you have the family which God established: it may spread itself, it may become as the stars of heaven for multitude, it may subdue all the earth to itself: but it never can mingle with other families, it never can become a portion of the great world from which God has divided it.'

The writer of the Epistle had no wish to deny the assertion of his countrymen, that the Lord



God had called out Abraham and Moses, and that the descendants of Abraham, those who had Moses's law, had a right to claim a place in God's family. He was most earnest that they should do so; his fear for them was that they would not do it. He thought they were not understanding the privileges which belonged to them as Jews,—not understanding them precisely on this ground, that they did not know that they were to be the children of a divine family. They were content to boast of their mortal legislator as the endower and enricher of their family, and not to claim any direct relation to Him who had appointed that legislator. Whence came this mistake? They had never thoroughly considered what the glory of Moses was, what his acts and words expressed, and what they implied. They expressed that he was a servant. The Lord of all had bidden him go in to Pharaoh, and he went. He had told him to lead the people out of Egypt, and he led them. He had given him laws and statutes to declare, and he declared them. He had put into his heart prayers and supplications for the people, and he poured them forth. He was a faithful servant in all God's house. He assumed to be nothing more.

But 'he was a witness of words that were to be spoken afterwards.' Was it possible that his character should have so corresponded to the character of God Himself, that he should have been a leader, teacher, legislator, when he all along proclaimed the invisible God to be the

leader, and teacher, and legislator, if there had not been some actual relation between God and man? Could the servant have so represented the Master if the connexion of Master and Servant had been the only one that was possible? Such kind of obedience, though in the strictest sense the obedience of a servant, was surely a witness and prophecy of an obedience which was not that of a servant, of an obedience grounded upon the closest fellowship of will and nature, a filial obedience. The whole life and history of Moses, so the writer argues, is a contradiction, unless some one appears who is more than a servant, who is a Son. Unless such a one appeared, the meaning and purpose of the Abrahamic family was not intelligible. It could not be seen why there was such an intimate connexion between God and His people, why such an awful distance between them, why men were to do the works, and exhibit the mind of God, to trust in Him, to hold converse with Him, to offer sacrifices to Him, to intercede for others to Him, and yet to hear him say 'Thou canst not see my face and live.'

Accordingly he goes on, 'but Christ as a Son over His own house.' I do not rest any thing upon the distinction between 'his' and 'his own' in this passage. I do not know what reading of the original authorized our translators in making that distinction. So far as I can discover, *αὐτοῦ* is the correct word in both places. As generally happens when there is the least departure from literal accuracy for the sake of bringing out the

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sense more clearly, the sense is impaired. If we follow our version I think there is great danger of our supposing that the house or family, in which Moses was a servant, is not the house or family over which Christ is a Son. But that supposition would destroy the force and coherency of the argument. The acts of Moses, it is urged, implied the existence of one greater than Moses. If there was *such* a servant in the house, there must be One in it who was not merely a servant. In this way it is that the relation between the New and the Old Testaments is unfolded. In this way the full worth of the first is asserted by the claim of a higher dignity for the second. 'Granted that you are members of a divine family; then you are bound to confess a divine Son. Granted that you cannot merely regard Moses as every heathen nation regards its real or imaginary progenitor; then you must uphold his right by shewing that a society lies beneath your particular society which is, in the strictest, fullest sense, a human and universal one. For though you may restrict your legislator by the ties of race and kindred, though you may say that he was a Levite and an Israelite, you cannot so tie down the Son of God, of whose authority he was bearing witness, for whose future manifestation he was preparing the way.'

Your house considered simply as the House of Israel, was built up by Abraham, by Isaac, by Jacob, by Moses; it was builded by some man. Considered more deeply and truly, that man was

but the agent and prophet of God, he was declaring 'He that built all things is God.' The house which is to bless and to include all the families of the earth is lying beneath this narrower temporary house of ours. When He comes forth who is the Son over it the meaning of the past is made clear, it is seen that Abraham and Moses were waiting, and not waiting in vain, for 'a city which has foundations.'

In this way also the writer of the Epistle fully justified and explained the conviction of the Jew, that his family could never be intended to lose itself in a mere world. When he looked out upon the vast empire to which he belonged, he saw a multitude of different kindreds and races all doing homage to one city, and to one man, half a general, half a God, who ruled over that city. Here was a *world* indeed, a world that had extinguished all local associations, all the boundaries which rivers, mountains, seas, had established between one people and another; but far more, that had swallowed up those feelings of family and of tribe, which in the earlier stages of the world's history had been so fertile of great deeds, to which Rome herself had owed all her greatness. Here were different bodies with different habits, traditions, expectations, cemented into one incongruous, artificial society; the subject-nations bending before the terror of the legions; the members of the conquering nation feeling that they had become slaves by the very power that made them rulers; confessing that their Roman



citizenship had lost its power and its significance; mourning over a past which could not be recalled; looking forward with a dim presentiment to a dark and inevitable future. To tell the chosen people, even in the hour of their greatest humiliation, that they were destined to become mere portions of such a world as this, would have been to tell them that all the promises made to their fathers had been mockeries. The fear was that they *were* sinking into this world. They might have become a province of the empire, and yet have retained much of their original character and distinctness; though it is perhaps hard to conceive that God would have suffered them to fall into that bondage, if their allegiance to Him and the sense of His government had not first been lost. But in fact the very habits of the Roman world had passed into their hearts, had adapted and shaped themselves to their own peculiar circumstances, had become a portion of their Jewish profession. The Pharisees who taught the people to say 'Corban, it is a gift,' and so to break the law of honouring father and mother, were laying the axe to the root of family life by their teaching. Their acts, their character, the rewards which they held out to men, did it still more effectually. For all these were selfish. Individual acquisition of prizes in this world, or in the world to come, took place of the feeling which had been so strong in the old prophets, that every blessing was a common blessing, that being all children of Abraham, all heirs of

the same covenant, there could be no strife or rivalry; each Israelite must be a sharer of the mercies which God had promised to the whole people, if he did not wilfully refuse them by choosing to be separate from it. Most of all, the sectarianism of the Pharisees made the very name of an Israelite family a contradiction; it was the glory of belonging to a school, not of being signed with the sign of the covenant which they coveted, and upon which they valued themselves. Altogether different as was the Jew from the other people of the earth, though never so exclusive and contemptuous as now, though never so much boasting of Abraham as his father, he was essentially imbued with the tempers and practices of the world,—with those tempers and practices that is to say, which are opposed to the very idea of a human family and of a divine family.

Accordingly, if we trace the history of the conflicts of the Jews with our Lord through the four Evangelists, we shall find that He was always presenting to them the name of a Father, and that this name was always utterly unintelligible to them; when it came forth actually and livingly before them, was fearful, even hateful, to them. 'They knew not that He spake to them of the Father,' says St. John. 'He hath not only broken the sabbath,' said the Jews, but said also that 'God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.' 'I and my Father are one,' said Jesus; 'then took they up stones to cast at Him.' 'Art thou the Son of God?' said the High Priest.



When Jesus answered, I am, ‘then rent he his clothes, saying, What need we any further witness? Ye have heard his blasphemy; what think ye? And they all judged him to be guilty of death.’ On the other hand, study all our Lord’s discourses to the multitude, still more all His utterances to His own disciples, all His announcements of the end for which He came into the world, all His descriptions of the kingdom which He would establish in it, and we shall see how His own Sonship lies at the root of them all, how from first to last He proclaims Himself as the elder brother of a family established already in heaven, thenceforth to adopt the dwellers upon earth as its members.

The Acts of the Apostles shew us how strongly dwelt the feeling in the minds of our Lord’s chosen ministers, that they belonged to the old Hebrew family, and were not in any sense citizens of the world. It seemed to the heathen on-lookers as if they were a more exclusive body than that out of which they came,—a Nazarene sect rising up in the midst of the older, more approved, more learned sects, which already filled Jerusalem, and were spread wherever Jewish synagogues had been established. They themselves declared that the Jesus whom their rulers had condemned and given up to the Romans, was both Lord and Christ, the anointed Son of God and King of the Jews, exalted into the heavens, and the real heir of David’s throne. They said that He had fulfilled the promises made to

the Fathers, that as children of the stock of Abraham they were bound to do him homage. But they said also, ‘because God has so raised up his Son Jesus, He has shed forth this which you now see and hear;’ because this was so, the Spirit had descended upon them; and men coming from all parts of the Roman and Parthian Empires could hear them speaking each in the tongue wherein he was born the wonderful works of God. That this wonder imported the breaking down of *some* barriers they could not doubt; how much it imported they knew not yet; but they called upon their countrymen to repent and be baptized that they might receive remission of their sins. They said that this Spirit was for them and for their children, and for as many as the Lord God should call. They became not a Nazarene sect, as the Gentiles fancied, but a family calling God their Father, and declaring that He had united them in his Son; and ‘none said that what he had was his own, but they had all things common.’

They were a Family. For a time it might seem as if their security lay in the smallness and limitation of that family. But assuredly it did not lie there. The Family existed under the condition of diffusing itself; it could rest upon no other proclamation than this, that ‘God had sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.’ Who were included in that adoption, they scarcely dared to ask themselves; they had not gone over the cities of Judah; they had no need to speak to any



but circumcised people. But they were driven into Samaria, they travelled into Syria ; St. Peter learned that what God had cleansed, he could not call common ; he dared not refuse baptism to those on whom God's Spirit had come. Saul of Tarsus, when he had arisen and been baptized, and the scales had fallen from his eyes, knew that Jesus Christ had been revealed in him that he might preach Him among the Gentiles. He taught in defiance of the remonstrances of Judaizers, even of the doubts of Apostles, that the Gentiles were fellow-heirs and of the same body, that those who had been baptized into Christ had put on Christ, that the mystery which had been hidden from the foundation of the world was now manifest, that there was no more Jew or Greek, Barbarian or Scythian—all were one in Christ.

Was the Church more a World in this developed state than it had been in its earliest infancy ? No ; it was more directly the antagonist of the world. The more universal it was, the more it asserted itself to be that family which was not builded by some man, but which God had builded ; the more mighty a protest it bore against a society which stood upon no relationships, which confessed no bonds but those of fear or self-interest, or sectarian self-will. With this last and bitterest form of worldliness it had to contend in Jerusalem. When that city fell the victim of Christ-denying Pharisees and Sadducees, of their mutual hatreds and their rivalship in crime, the divine family emerged out of the ruin. Those who saw

it by a light from heaven, perceived in it the New Jerusalem, the bride of a heavenly Lord. Those who saw it with earthly eyes perceived that it had some mysterious organization, some power of binding its members together which no other society in the empire, which the empire itself, did not possess. It was an excusable instinct which led the emperors to look upon it as a dangerous, secret confederacy, and to suspect those sacraments which were so much mightier than the military oath. It was a natural instinct which led them to look with especial dread and dislike upon those in the different cities who bore both the name and character of Fathers. Certain it is that wherever the Christian Church spread itself among Latins, or Greeks, or Barbarians, it spread itself as a family. Its strength lay in the proclamation, that the one Eternal Father had sent forth His only-begotten Son to be the first-born of many brethren. Certain it is that all its heresies and divisions lay in the denial of this fact. Certain it is that the loss of the feeling that it was a family, when its titles and offices became confused with the old Roman or the new Byzantine titles and offices, tended to augment all the divisions which arose from the subtleties of the eastern mind or the desire of dominion in the western, and more than any thing prepared the way for the great Mahometan dogma, which is so remarkably the assertion of God simply as a Sovereign, not at all as a Father ; of men simply as servants, not at all as children. Whatever strength was



given to Christendom to resist a proclamation which had so much of truth in it as a witness against Christian idolatries, surely lay in its feeling that it was a divine family, that all the orders and degrees among men rested upon relationships, ultimately upon *the* relation between the Father and the Son. The Popedom, which was such a remarkable, but such an awkward, effort to realise this idea, at last realized it by slaying it. That system which boasted itself as the great rival and antagonist of the world, became in every sense a part of the world; its earthly father, the substitute for the Heavenly Father, as the emperor had been; claiming kingship while he affected to despise kings; practising abominations in the ecclesiastical high-places to which the darkest state-policy could present no rival. Then that old German reverence for human relationships, for the honour of the marriage-bed, for the actual bonds of fatherhood and sonship, broke through the chains of this system, affirmed that celibacy was not a state which God had ordained for the priest more than the layman, reasserted the sanctity of earthly and common things. But the Church since the Reformation has had one of the direst of its old enemies to fight with. The idea of it as a great sect or a small sect, a patronized or an unpatronized sect, a great collection of sects, a great machine for converting the nations, has more and more driven out the old faith, has led people to think again that the Church must be either a mere world, or

else a narrow, self-willed confederation; that it must either cease to be a spiritual body, or cease to be a universal one. Less and less are we able to understand the words, ‘Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house are we, if we keep the beginning of the confidence firm unto the end.’

And yet, brethren, those words have come down to us—are written for us. They do say, very distinctly, ‘*You* are God’s household, if you will not disclaim the title. All the privileges of this family are yours, unless you say, We have no concern with them, we will not have them.’ The words do speak thus, and speak at a time when we have especial need of them. We may not hear the cry for a universal fraternity as loudly as we heard it two years ago: a lull may have succeeded to the storm, a lull, perhaps, not less portentous than the storm. But do not fancy that the thought which came forth with such strength, and yet with such weakness, then, the tremendous travail ending only in wind, is really extinguished, or can be extinguished in men’s hearts. It is working in a hundred different ways; it will work for the ruin of all the existing forms of society, if it does not work for their restoration and renewal.

Which it shall do in our own country must depend chiefly on the faith of its citizens; but much also on the question whether we have, in the institutes of our society, the witnesses that we are members of a divine family, having its highest home in heaven, its continual work on



earth, grounded on the being of God Himself, entering into all the most ordinary occupations of His creatures. Such institutes I find in the occasional Services of our Prayer-Book—the Services for Baptism, infant and adult; the Catechism; the Forms for Confirmation, for Marriage, for the Visitation of the Sick, for the Burial of the Dead, for the Ordination of Priests and Deacons, for the Consecration of Bishops; lastly, the Communion. Here, it seems to me, is a full, consistent, harmonious exhibition of the Church in its character of a divine family, wholly spiritual in its constitution, yet leavening and directing all the relations, toils, sufferings, enjoyments, offices, punishments, which belong to us as citizens of an earthly country. Here I find the largest conception of a human society, of one which deals with man as man, which never forgets the past or the present in its care for the future, but which is always shewing us what a dark or what a glorious future, must come forth for each man, and for all, out of the present and the past. I propose to examine these Services in detail, not beginning with them, not dwelling upon them as if they were perfect, or as if we had no deeper ground than them to rest upon; always deriving our principles from the revelation of God Himself, always striving to shew how the experience of mankind has tested and confirmed them; then producing these Services as the merciful gifts of God to us Englishmen; which embody for our use the principles of Scripture; which enable us to profit by the

results of experience; which teach us what a house our fathers felt that Christ, the Son of God, had prepared for them; which teach us what a house we and our children may dwell in, what a house we may have the privilege of opening to all the nations of the earth, if we keep the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end.



## SERMON II.

## NATURE AND GRACE.

## THE SERVICE FOR INFANT BAPTISM.

Preached in Lincoln's Inn, November 18, 1849.

EPHESIANS II. part of ver. 3, 4 and 5.

*And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved).*

MANY of you may remember a treatise written by Mr. Burke in his early days, entitled *A Vindication of Natural Society*. He meant it to imitate the style, and ridicule the opinions, of Lord Bolingbroke. To defend natural religion against what he conceived to be the inventions of priests, had been a great object of the free-thinking nobleman. His parodist maintained that natural society was in like manner, and on the same grounds, superior to all artificial society. The satire was ingenious in itself, specially happy in its application to a man who despised the people at least as much as he despised priests, and who valued his free sentiments as part of his aristocratical distinction and privilege.

You well know that before the close of Mr. Burke's career he was called to encounter with

gravity and earnestness that opinion which he had put forth years before as the *reductio ad absurdum* of another. Natural Society was vindicated against artificial society, not in jest, but with the most passionate enthusiasm, by men who were determined to prove their conviction in acts as well as words. It was affirmed that all forms of human life had become utterly corrupt; that to restore them, there must be an ascent to first principles; that man must be studied in a state of nature by those who would know what he truly is; that on the rights which belong to him in this state all laws must rest. Fancy pictures of savages dwelling in purity and simplicity were then plentiful and popular. People had little difficulty in believing that this was their own primitive condition, for they saw in it the signs of an age of gold.

The experiments to restore this age in modern Europe opened men's eyes to a true view of it elsewhere. They began to perceive, what they might have known before, that the life of savages has nothing at all paradisaical in it; that it is brutal and cruel; and that the good which is certainly mixed with it, is just so much departure from nature, so much approximation to another, and, as it had been deemed, a more impure, social condition.

Thoughtful persons began to ask themselves, whether barbarism was indeed the first condition of human beings, whether it must not have been a degeneracy from some higher one. And those who arrived at opposite conclusions on this point,



still seemed to agree that the state which is natural to man, whether that into which he has a tendency to sink, or that from which he has never emerged, is not one to which he can seek to return, or in conformity with which he can reform his institutions or himself.

Whilst these controversies were going on in one direction, the words 'Nature' and 'Grace' were giving earnest occupation to a very different class of persons. Certain notions of men's natural goodness had become current in popular literature, had been recognized in books of morality, had found their way into the discourses of divines. Butler in his Sermons at the Rolls Court, had maintained with more than his accustomed power, that human nature involves the idea of social Affections and of Conscience, that we cannot explain obvious facts, if we refer all we do and feel to a low, selfish origin. Such teaching was felt by this admirable writer to be the only adequate antagonist to the grovelling dogmas of his day, which he thought were undermining all morality and all faith. Yet it came to be denounced upon religious grounds. Nature, it was said, is a wholly evil thing; by nature we are children of wrath; by grace only are we made capable of any better feelings and hopes; by grace only are we able to do righteous acts.

Those who spoke most strongly on these questions, took little heed of the debate respecting states of society. They never supposed that truths which concerned their personal being had any thing

to do with what they would have called mere worldly politics. They were inclined to leave all such subjects to persons whom they considered incapable of any high spiritual apprehensions. Those who were occupied with the world's business, were disposed, in their turn, to treat discussions about nature and grace, as the revival of an obsolete school-jargon, which seemed to them so much the more mischievous, because it was not confined to professional teachers, but was affecting the feelings and discourses of men and women in all classes and of all degrees of intellect.

The time has now come, I believe, when the separation between topics of great human interest is no longer possible; when men will not bear to be told that a word means *this* in political science and *that* in theological science; when they will trace out the connexion between the two, and if they can find none, will suspect that both are practically dead. Let us see whether St. Paul's language may not throw some light upon the social question as well as upon the individual one; may not remove some of the perplexities which we have seen besetting the treatment of each.

I. 'By nature ye are children of wrath, even as others.' This seems a hard saying. You would be inclined perhaps to set it down as a stern theological sentence, which may be good in pulpits or in chairs of divinity, but which practically must be explained away; which in its plain, obvious meaning, only some rigid, inhuman doctor would entertain. But how far does it differ



from the conclusion to which we have been led by actual experience; from that judgment of savage life which intelligent travellers, economists, statisticians, have pronounced? You say that savages are cruel, hardhearted, revengeful, incapable of self-government, apt to break through the bonds which they do reverence. You admit that there *are* such bonds, that the sense of law is not wanting among them, nor the acknowledgment of family- and tribe-relationships, nor an honor for the names of stranger and of guest. But you say that these chains are very frail, that the natural inclination is continually too mighty for them, that in the process of years you see the inclination growing stronger, and the restraining influences weaker. You believe generally then that this natural state is an inhuman state, that man carried along by his nature ceases to be truly and properly man.

Does St. Paul say more than this? Yes, he says this more. He says it is not only the savage who has this nature. 'You, my disciples, you, my fellow-Christians, have it. Each one of you has it. I the apostle of God and of Jesus Christ have it. I have all that in me which the savage has, all the same inclination to anger, bitterness, brutality. By nature I am a child of wrath even as he is, a child of *όργη*, of passion, of mere impulse<sup>1</sup>, governed by the things about

\* This, I conceive, is the Apostle's meaning. I do not find the words, 'God's wrath,' in the sentence, and therefore I do not put them there. I think the passage may be construed as well, or better, without that interpolation. The sense I have given is more strictly in accordance with the previous passage. 'We all had our

me and the impressions they make on my senses, apt to look up to them as if I sprang from them, as if they had some title of paternity over me.'

St. Paul makes this assertion respecting himself and all men. And therefore he anticipates the verdict of experience that a natural society, or a society of men following nature, is altogether monstrous and contradictory. It is not Society; it is the strife of a number of atoms each labouring not to associate with the other—claiming independence. If these warring atoms do combine, do in any measure work together, it is because the natural tendency has, to that extent, been overcome.

But what is the substitute for a natural society? Is it an artificial society?—a society built upon conventions, arrangements, compromises—in plain language, falsehood? A society of this kind existed in its highest, completest form in the Roman empire, when St. Paul wrote to the

conversation in the lusts of our flesh, doing the will of our flesh and of our minds.' But if commentators will have the other meaning I do not oppose them. The phrase, 'wrath of God,' does, no doubt, occur in a passage of St. John's Gospel, which may be compared with this, though the connexion between them is not very obvious. We can have no doubt that the wrath of God rests upon whatever is evil, that He is carrying on a perpetual war with it, and that when we see Him through the mists of our own lusts and passions, His love bears the aspect of wrath, according to those bold and startling, but profound words of the Psalmist, 'With the froward thou wilt learn frowardness.' At all events, we must be taught what the mind of God is from the next clause, in which it is directly and obviously declared, not from this in which we only force the Name to appear by an effort of our own.



church of Ephesus. Nowhere will it have exhibited itself more fully than in that rich commercial city, where Asiatic, Greek and Latin civilization and luxury were so curiously mingled. The Apostle felt that he was speaking true language—every one to whom he wrote felt in his inmost heart that he was—when he said that those who were living according to the maxims of such a society were children of passion and impulse, were following their lower instincts just as much as savages were. Nature there might be restrained in some of its ruder excesses; but it indemnified itself by the multitude of ingenious and intricate devices which it framed for gratifying its maddest and basest caprices. A society of this kind was existing on the continent of Europe in the last century. Its hateful anomalies led Rousseau and his school to cry out for a return to the life of the woods. And though the event proved how terribly they had been mistaken in the principle from which they started, it proved also that what is merely corrupt cannot last; that unless a society has something vital and restorative within it, no refinement and civility, no amount of modern or traditional intelligence, can hold it together.

Or perhaps if civilization be fenced round by the sanctions of religion, by its terrors as well as by its hopes, it may be able to maintain a long, even an indefinite, term of existence? The civilization of the Roman empire *was* protected by these sanctions; by a very great and complicated religious machinery. The imperial power did its

utmost to preserve that machinery, and to make it effectual for the preservation of the state. The civilization of the last century in Western Europe had the same safeguard—a religious system worked into the very tissue of society, upheld by politicians upon the same calculation. It is true that in both cases actual faith had disappeared; that the more exalted a man was in his position, the more he felt that it was his business and right to despise that which he counted indispensable for the vulgar. But this result seemed to be connected by some necessary law with the other phenomena of that state of things. How was it possible for men to believe that as a mighty power governing themselves, which they valued first of all as an instrument for governing others? When they looked within and saw what hands were moving the wires, or knew that they were moving them, how could they help despising the fiction that some invisible agency was at work upon them? The traditions which they professed to revere spoke of a God of Truth, and Righteousness. They knew that they sought to preserve faith in these traditions for unrighteous and false ends. How could such a contradiction remain any time hidden from themselves or from others? It did not remain hidden, we all know, from either. It was laid bare by the most fearful evidence. It was declared, that if an artificial fabric of vulgar earthly materials cannot stand by itself, it cannot stand by feigning that it is of celestial workmanship.



And yet the feeling that society is, some way or other, of divine workmanship, has survived all this frightful hypocrisy—all the shocks which were the righteous punishment of it. This faith has never deserted human beings at any time. When it seemed feeblest, it has come forth in its greatest strength. The abuses of rulers have driven men to it; it has started up alive and energetic after revolutions which seemed commissioned to put it down. Only when it has so re-appeared, it has come with a sterner and more commanding countenance. It has said, ‘Because God directs the order of men’s lives, and creates the fellowship among them, therefore society cannot stand upon conventions. Faith cannot exist to uphold that which is untenable, by its promises or its terrors: it must exist to bear witness against whatever is false in its conception, unrighteous in its operation. It may maintain orders and degrees among men: if they are grounded in real and permanent distinctions, which God has established in man’s constitution, it will. But it will ratify them by asserting something deeper. It must proclaim a great human community which vindicates the highest privileges for all its members, which denies that any one can possess them to the exclusion of any other.’ Such a human fellowship would justify the assertion of our great moralist and divine, that humanity has social affections and a conscience at its root, that these must be acknowledged in every man. But it would justify also the assertion of those

who say that man naturally is self-seeking, and that his heart, if left to nature, will bring forth nothing but weeds. For this fellowship must assert, by the very terms of its foundation, that it is not natural—that it has a constant fight to fight with nature—that God only can help it to enter upon that fight and to win the victory.

II. Now of such a fellowship St. Paul was speaking to men who were bound together in it, when he said, ‘God, who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith He loved us when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ: by grace are ye saved.’ He had said that men by nature were children of passion or wrath. That was no new faith for a Jew to entertain. He had been taught from his infancy that all true society stands upon a calling of God; that his countrymen were taken into covenant with God and circumcised, as a witness that they were not natural creatures, that they were not to obey the impulses of their nature, but were God’s servants. The history of his fathers left him no doubt that when they yielded to nature, they became idolators of visible things, like all the nations round about; that then their covenant, their calling, their national existence, became a falsehood. The same history left him in no doubt that when they resisted their nature and remembered God, and believed in his covenant, they became what men ought to be; they were not raised to some imaginary level; they were not extra human or inhuman; they were



simply honest and faithful men, capable of doing their work because they trusted in Him who had set them their work; growing daily in light and in knowledge of Him as they resisted their own darkness; serving Him more and more without fear, with simple, loving hearts, as they understood what His will toward them was. That a society stands by Grace, was in his mind the most reasonable of all propositions. He could conceive of no society as having any moral ground, as consisting of living men, which did not so stand. And now he had been taught by a revelation from heaven that people of all kindreds had such a ground to rest upon, and that it was his glorious office to tell them of that ground—to preach the gospel of the Son of God. This gospel was, that He had taken upon Him the flesh of man; that in that flesh He had overcome all the powers which resist and degrade man, that He had presented His human soul and body pure and perfect to His Father; that therefore in Him God had established a covenant with Gentile as well as Jew, had treated both as reconciled to Him in His only-begotten Son.

Of this reconciliation and new constitution of human society upon a filial or family ground, I spoke generally last week. To-day my object has been to shew that a society so established cannot be a society of natural men in the sense in which St. Paul uses that word. It must be a society of men raised above nature—placed upon another foundation; upon that which St. Paul

speaks of when he says, ‘By grace are ye, or, have ye been saved.’ To change the language but not the idea, to substitute the words of St. John for those of St. Paul; those who form the society which has been spoken of must be men born from above; they must rest not upon their natural birth, but upon a divine birth—upon that fact which is expressed in the words, ‘God, who is rich in mercy, hath quickened us together with Christ.’

That this was a fact, St. Paul proclaimed in the different cities of the Roman Empire: that it was a fact, he maintained against the circumcised Jew, who would have limited all the knowledge of the living and true God to himself, and therefore lost that knowledge; against the Gentile who sought his gods in nature, and acquired nothing from that worship but a loss of his human dignity. That it was a fact, Jews and Gentiles confessed, by receiving a common baptism, into the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. All the Churches throughout the Roman Empire were so many witnesses that the Incarnation of Christ has established human society upon this deep and eternal basis, and that there is none other upon which it can be established. Jerusalem fell, the Roman Empire fell, and still the baptised family went on in different lands, testifying by its very existence, that this is our true human constitution, and that all changes in governments, all convulsions—moral, political, physical, till the final one—will prove it to be so.



Now, brethren, it is this principle of which our Baptismal Service is bearing witness to us. You cannot ask me why I refer to it instead of to Scripture. I have referred to Scripture; I have rested all I have said upon the declaration of St. Paul, and upon the evidence which the experience of mankind has supplied in illustration and support of that declaration. But I refer to our Baptismal Service because I want you to feel that I am not stating a doctrine, but a fact; that I am not putting forth a certain theory concerning the world, but a truth in which you and I are as much concerned as the Ephesians were. If our Baptismal Service says truly, that *we* who are conceived and born in sin are born again and made heirs of everlasting salvation, if these words are spoken simply, honestly—meaning what they seem to mean, what plain men would take them to mean, and not something else—if they intimate that an actual blessing has been conferred upon us, and not a possible or hypothetical one; if it is a blessing of which the preacher may speak to his congregation, and which each one of the members of his congregation may claim as his own; then the principle which St. Paul announces is the principle of English society; we may act upon it; we may reform our own practice individually and socially in accordance with it. If, on the contrary, all these are merely enigmatical phrases with which we may play fast and loose as we please, which may signify something for some of those to whom they are spoken, and nothing at all to the

great majority; if we have been guilty of this solemn trifling when we have taken your children in our arms; if we have said very great things about the relation in which they stand to God, when we do not think that they stand in any relation to Him at all, or a merely nominal one; if we mean that they are children, in a vague sense, of some heavenly Father, not the children of the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in whom alone the name sons is a real name, on whose incarnation and redemption our right to it depends;—I do not see what protection we have against the abominations of corrupt civilized society; what the alternative is when these have become too terrible for endurance, but a return to the wildest condition of nature. If this be so, the Gospel has no hold on human life; it concerns a few individuals, excepted out of the mass of perishing creatures; but it does not concern us as men; it gives us no place in a human fellowship.

This, brethren, is the reason why we cling to this service, why we feel that we must maintain it in its simplicity and integrity. It is not that we may attack or perplex a party in the Church which fought a good fight in former days against some of its corruptions, which asserted with great manfulness that God's grace is the only root of goodness in man, that man living according to nature is corrupt and evil. It is not to make them less zealous in maintaining these great truths, or to force them into the use of expressions



which modify or explain them away. But it is to vindicate them from the narrow, self-exalting party-use which is made of them, to shew that they are compatible with a belief in that rich mercy from which St. Paul deduces them, with Christ's incarnation and death for all, which he puts forth as the only demonstration of them; it is that they may be a witness for the redemption of the world, and not a denial of it; a witness that man is not his own saviour by his faith or by his works; it is for this that we plead for the old language, and ask for leave to construe it in a plain, homely, English manner; not in a way which leads common people to suppose that the service of God involves an amount of double-dealing which would be intolerable in the transactions of men. I am well aware that there are difficulties in the minds of earnest and good men respecting the connexion of faith and repentance with baptism, which require to be most patiently considered. So far am I from shrinking from that investigation, or putting forward a literal adherence to these services, as a plea for avoiding it, that I purpose to enter upon it in my next Sermon, and to shew you how much illustration it receives from a comparison between the office of baptism for children with that of baptism for adults. But I do not believe that that examination will oblige us to modify one of the statements which I have been making to-day on the authority of St. Paul, which I have been justifying by the words of our Reformers. I believe we shall find every one of

these positions strengthened and deepened when we look steadily at the difficulties which the actual experience of human life seems to raise against them. In proportion as we feel how little we have claimed for ourselves, or for our children, the privilege of being quickened together with Christ, in proportion as we feel the need which we and they have of a thorough and radical repentance, in that proportion I believe will be the determination with which we cling to the doctrine of our Baptismal Service for Infants, and determine that no power on earth shall take it from us.



## SERMON III.

REPENTANCE, BAPTISM, THE GIFT OF THE  
SPIRIT.

## SERVICE FOR ADULT BAPTISM.

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Preached in Lincoln's Inn, November 25, 1849.

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## ACTS II. 38, 39.

*Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*

THE Forerunner of our Lord came preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Those who were already in covenant with God, possessing all the privileges of Israelites, were treated as if they were Gentiles, were called upon to receive that sign of purification which was necessary to a heathen before he could take part in the temple-worship. I have noticed on former occasions what was implied in this humiliation of the Jew. He was taught to look upon himself as a man, to feel that every evil which cleave to any human being was cleaving to him. And to what did it cleave? To himself, to his very heart. To himself, to his heart, John spoke.

He awakened in the heart of the people the consciousness of sin; therefore the people acknowledged him as a prophet. But he told them also, that that sin of which they were conscious might be washed away. It stuck close to each man, but it was not himself. It defiled his heart, perhaps ruled it; but the heart might seek to have the corruption removed, might cry out against its tyrant. John called upon it to do so. 'Repent,' he said, 'turn to your true Master, turn to the God of righteousness and purity, who seeks to make you right and pure, and you shall receive remission of your sins. Here is the pledge of it, the simplest you can conceive, a testimony which speaks to all, and all can understand. As surely as this water cleanses outward filth, so surely will He who permits and commands me to baptize you in it, bring you into the right and healthy state, which you have lost by forgetting Him.'

This was part of John's message, not the whole of it. 'Behold,' he said, 'one is standing among you whom ye know not. He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.' The word was spoken. He whom they knew not came forth. He was baptized, we are told, that He might fulfil all righteousness. He was declared to be the Son of God in whom the Father was well pleased. The Spirit descended upon Him. By that Spirit he overcame the evil Spirit. By that Spirit he healed the sick. In that Spirit He acted, thought, prayed; by that



Spirit He offered up himself to death. By that Spirit He rose from the dead, by that Spirit he ascended on high. His apostles were assembled in a chamber near the temple, waiting for the promise which he had given them, that the same Spirit should come upon them and endue them with power to testify of Him. The Spirit did come upon them, says St. Luke, in the chapter from which my text is taken. They spoke with other tongues as He gave them utterance. Jews from various parts of the Roman and Parthian empires, who were gathered to keep the great feast in the city of their fathers, heard Galilæan fishermen proclaiming, each in his own dialect, the wonderful works of God. In plain speech, in the tongue in which the inhabitants of Palestine ordinarily spoke, or else in the Greek, which was a more universal language, and was intended to be the New Testament language, St. Peter declared that that Jesus who had been crucified in Jerusalem, was both Lord and Christ, the Lord and King of their land and of every land, the Christ who had been anointed with the Spirit of the Father, that He might bestow it upon men. Hearing these words, we are told the multitude were pricked in their heart, and said, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Then Peter answered, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to them that are afar

off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.'

This story is at all events consistent; the same idea runs through the whole of it. Yet there is an evident progress in it; precisely that progress which the commencement of it had prepared us to expect. John's is the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. It assumes that God is seeking to raise His people out of a false condition, and to bring them into their true condition. It assumes that man must turn to God in order to receive the blessing which is designed for him, must recognise the voice which is speaking to his heart, and not confound it with his own, or with the babblings of the world about him. It assumes that God can and will set a man right who thus listens to His call. It assumes that He gives men a token of that which He does for them, one that is not special and individual, but common and human. But it says that this witness of God's cleansing is not all which man wants. He needs a quickening, life-giving Spirit, he needs that which shall burn up what is evil in him, that which shall inspire him with energy to act and speak—with wisdom, to act and speak rightly. He needs a filial Spirit, an adopting Spirit, one which shall enable him to call God his Father, to call men his brethren. This Spirit our Lord proves that He has himself, this He says that His disciples shall receive. Would not the history be altogether maimed and imperfect if there were no evidence that they did receive it? Supposing that



they received it, what is that to us if we are not told whether the blessing belongs to our generation as well as to theirs? The text says that it *does*. It declares the day of Pentecost to be not an isolated day in the world's annals, but to be the unfolding of God's complete purpose towards man, the first example of a gift which all whom the Lord God should call might afterwards inherit.

You observe that the language of John the Baptist is taken up by St. Peter, and adopted into the language of the new dispensation: 'Repent,' he says to the Jews, 'and be baptized every one of you for the remission of sins.' Here is a distinct declaration that neither the old principle nor the terms in which it was expressed, had become obsolete. Still the baptism was to be a witness that sin was remitted; still they were to turn to God for that remission. But they were to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. The baptism did not look forward to Him as about to be revealed, but back upon the revelation which He had made of Himself. It imported that *Jesus*, the Deliverer, had come, and that He had accomplished His work of deliverance. It imported that *Christ*, in whom God's Spirit was, whom it had marked as the well-beloved Son, had been manifested. It imported that He, the King and High Priest of the universe, had not been anointed for Himself alone, but that what was poured first upon the Head had run down to the skirts of the garment. Lastly, it conveyed a blessing which St. Peter said was for them and for their children,

and for all whom the Lord his God should call; they would receive the self-same Spirit who had come upon the apostles, and had signified that the limits of race and language were broken down—the same Spirit who had first descended upon the Only-begotten of the Father.

When I was speaking to you last Sunday of the state of Nature and the state of Grace; of baptism as the witness to us that we are in a state of grace, and are redeemed out of nature; I hinted that there were difficulties of a very serious kind besetting the consideration of the subject. Such statements as I made were, I said, offensive to many excellent persons; offensive especially on this ground, that they seemed to treat the blessings which baptism assures us of, as absolute, independent, unconditional. If they are, what place is left for repentance and faith? How can it be said that these are the terms upon which God grants us all his higher blessings? Or, to state the case in another way, how can a creature be susceptible of spiritual blessings who is not in a spiritual state? If the chief of all treasures be the knowledge of God, how can the chief of all treasures be conferred on a creature without the capacity for that or any knowledge?

I need scarcely tell you in how many different forms of expression this argument has been presented. I shall not allude at all to any of the more scornful and contemptuous modes of stating it: any one who finds them beneficial or needful to the support of his cause, will, of course, resort



to them. To protest against the use of ridicule on this or any subject is vain and ignominious. It will be used whether we like it or not. We shall be afraid of it if we do not understand our own meaning; if we do not feel that it is a deep solemn meaning; if *we* are not in earnest. If it is not God's truth we are defending we need not complain of the weapons which are drawn forth against us, for we must be overcome in one way or another; if it is His truth the jesters of the earth may do their best: they will find it too strong for them.

But I speak to men who are really distressed by what seems to them a contradiction, and who are determined not to rest satisfied with any contradiction. So far from telling them that they are wrong in this resolution, I should say to them, 'God will never shew you the truth unless you adhere to it.' So far from wishing to make an exception in favour of this subject because it is so serious a one, I should say, 'The more serious it is, the less should you tolerate any looseness or vagueness in your apprehensions respecting it.' It is looseness and vagueness against which I protested last Sunday; the habit of using words as if they might stretch or contract according to our convenience; of uttering a great proposition concerning the acts of God to man, and then annulling it by some exception or some ambiguous phrase a moment after. This is a perilous course for our sincerity and faith; perilous in proportion to the largeness and reality and awfulness

of the question about which we are occupied. But there is no peril in stating our confusions to others or ourselves, if we desire clearness; God wishes light and not darkness for us.

I. You will perceive that the question of the relation between baptism and repentance comes out in the passage of St. Peter's sermon on which I have been commenting. I have chosen it because it sets the connexion between them in the strongest light, and because by placing repentance first, it seems to afford the strongest support to the objection I am considering. I would beseech you to weigh it well, looking at it in itself and in the context of the history. Does it seem to you from either, that St. Peter regarded repentance as something paid on man's side for a certain blessing which God for that price is willing to bestow? Does that idea, or any modification of it, enter into the Apostle's discourse? He begins with proclaiming what he says is a fact: 'God hath exalted that Jesus whom ye crucified to be Lord and Christ.' Then when they cry, 'What shall we do?' he says, 'Repent; turn round to God, and be baptized.' Repentance from sin, here, just as in John the Baptist's preaching, as everywhere else in Scripture, is yielding to a call from God, who tells us we are in a false and rebellious state—is giving ourselves to Him that He may put us into our true state. The notion of it as purchase-money for certain advantages, is one at which every prophet and every apostle would have revolted—revolted, as profane and godless.



Would they have revolted less at the notion that man being in one state by nature, raises himself to another, that of grace, by repentance? If the state of grace is the state in which a man refers all his life to God, if his repentance is a renunciation of self-will, St. Peter must needs protest against such a doctrine of repentance as monstrous. He does, for he follows the command to repent by the command, 'Be baptized; ' yield to an ordinance which implies that God is the sourcee and spring of all that is good in you ; of the pricking in your hearts, of your repentance, of your faith, of every movement towards heaven now going on in you, or that has gone on in you at any time, of all moral and spiritual acts whatsoever, of any kindly affection you have ever manifested towards a child or a parent, of every wish and hope that has not been selfish and shameful. That is the meaning of the act to which he bids you submit ; an act, as he expresses it, for the remission of sins ; which declares that God puts them from you, that He does not treat you as a servant, but as His child in Christ. If then I affirm baptism to be the assertion of an absolute, undoubted, unconditional truth concerning the condition of that person who comes to it, am I interfering with repentance or faith? Only if I make repentance and faith contradictions ; only if I utterly mistake, and invert their nature ; only if I suppose them to be bargains for obtaining a blessing which is given without money and price ; only if I take them to be violent self-willed efforts

for realizing that which is never realized except by self-surrender.

II. But we saw there was a point of St. Peter's words, which did not apply merely to a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins : 'Ye shall receive,' he said, 'the gift of the Holy Ghost.' A new question arises upon these words. Have you not just admitted, it is said, that all spiritual life whatever comes from God? Supposing then these Jews to repent on St. Peter's preaching, and believe the Gospel, was not this a proof that they *had* received the Holy Ghost? Could any other power but His have worked that conversion in them? Were they not already the subjects of an influence which was yet held out as a blessing *consequent* upon their receiving baptism? I wish you to feel that this doubt arises out of the express language of Scripture. If it affects any other documents it affects the words of the Apostle first. The contradiction, if it be one, is not of recent ecclesiastical invention. It is here—here not in some isolated text, but in the discourse which was delivered when the Church first came forth in a living substantive form ; a discourse which we might expect would contain the very charter of its existence. You will find the same apparent opposition in St. John's Gospel. No one asserts more strongly than he, that Christ was the Light of the world ; that all the light which had ever been in any man's heart came from Him : yet he says in distinct words, 'The Holy Ghost was not yet given, for Christ was



not yet glorified.' Such language must have some definite and important meaning.

We have already heard the Baptist announcing this gift of the Holy Ghost as the special effect of His coming, 'whose shoes he was not worthy to stoop down and unloose.' We have seen how it was betokened by our Lord's own acts during the time of His humiliation. And if we did look upon the Church as that Divine family which had been unfolding itself out of the Jewish nation and family, and which then became manifest to the world,—conscious of its own existence,—when he who had dwelt and suffered among men was shewn to be one with God, we should, I think, have a very real apprehension of the nature of this new blessing. To feel a spirit working within them, prompting them to good deeds and right words, awakening them to sorrow and faith and thankfulness; this was the privilege of every prophet, of every Israelite. The history and the philosophy of the Gentiles shew that the consciousness of it was among them: when they were not conscious of it *we* are bound to attribute whatever was noble in them to this origin. But a *family* of men claiming to be the sons of God, feeling that they were so, and therefore that they were brethren to each other, shewing forth their filial relation and their brotherly relation in act, proving that selfishness was not the law of the universe, but was the contradiction of its law; this was a novelty in the history of mankind. Search as much as you will, you will find nothing like it,

though you may find everywhere the anticipation of it, the proofs that nothing else would avail for human necessities. We are wont to hear much in this day of the spirituality of the Hindoo books, of the earnest litanies of the Zendavesta. I do not wish to dispute such panegyrics. If it was lawful to strain evidence either way, I would rather strain it to make claims of this kind on behalf of our race good than to set them at nought. But you cannot bribe or twist history to give you a Day of Pentecost among Brahmins or Persians. You cannot shew me a body of men who thought nothing which they had was their own, who served God with freedom and thankfulness, yet never withdrew from the service of each other, who received all common blessings as God's blessings, as sacraments of His presence, eating their daily bread with joy and singleness of heart. The Spirit had been moving upon the face of the waters, had been working mysteriously, mightily, in all the thoughts, faiths, works of men. But the Spirit had not yet been *given*, for Jesus was not yet glorified. The adopting, filial Spirit had not yet built up a fellowship among men. Those who had been stirred by him to feel that the crucified Man was Lord and Christ, and to feel that they had been striving against Him, were baptized that they might indeed receive Him, and be fashioned by Him, and might teach their children that he was their guide, their comforter, the pledge that they were the children of grace, and not of nature, that they were born, not of blood, nor of the



will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

III. Both these questions which I have been considering, that which concerns the nature of faith and repentance, and that which concerns the gift of the Holy Spirit, suggest themselves to every reader of our Services, for those who are baptized in infancy, and for those who are baptized in riper years, especially to him who compares them together.

The Baptism for Infants, it is said, uses large, dangerous, unqualified language respecting the regeneration of little creatures incapable of repentance or faith; and then, by the awkward device of sponsors, tacitly confesses that these are necessary conditions to the attainment of the blessing. The Service for the adult assumes that repentance and faith have preceded the desire for Baptism, and yet it prays that the man then baptized may receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Now if it is not true that the proper constitution of man is his constitution in Christ, I acknowledge that nothing can be more strange than to claim that constitution for an infant. If our repentance and faith give us this constitution; if they make us that which God does not intend us to be; I admit that one who is conscious of nothing to repent of, who is incapable of faith, cannot, without the most fearful outrage of language and truth, be said to be made a child of God. And instead of regarding this radical falsehood as cured, or in any degree mitigated, by the introduction of sponsors, I should

at once confess that this was only a fresh thread of deceit and imposture introduced into a web already complicated enough. But if it is all-important for the sake of God's truth, and for the sake of man's blessedness, to assert that the penitent and believing man does merely confess that to be true which *is* true according to God's eternal law; that the unbelieving and impenitent man does deny his own position to be that which it actually is; if it is needful to declare that repentance and faith whenever they shall appear proceed from God and not from the creature; if it is needful to signify that human instruments are employed by God to educate his children for a knowledge of their state; and that human beings may be the means of leading them to deny that state; then I claim the Service for the Baptism of Infants as one of the great witnesses which God has provided for us of a truth which we are every hour in danger of losing through our pride, and conceit, and self-exaltation, through our refusal to believe in God's character, in His actual redemption of mankind by His Son; through the low and grovelling notions which we form of the nature of our position, and of the glory and responsibility which God has put upon us.

So again, the Service of Baptism for Riper Years is false in its whole conception, if a man by his repentance and faith has already obtained what he wants, or if all which God promises to give him is a certain amount of security that he shall not be punished hereafter, a certain amount of



hope that he shall be rewarded hereafter. If this be what the Scripture means by entering the kingdom of Heaven, doubtless the prayer that a man who has given that which is demanded of him *may* receive the Holy Ghost, is the idlest of all prayers. But if this is an utterly detestable and yet a very prevalent kind of religion, which it is the business of a Church by all possible means to discountenance and repudiate, because there is in it no root of God's love, no fruits of love to man; if what Scripture does assume is that the penitent man claims the promise that God will be his Father, and will receive him into his family, and will enable him to take some place in that family, as the servant and helper and dispenser of God's grace to his brethren; then it surely is most desirable that he, penitent and believing, should be assured that he *has* that grace which he seeks, that he *is* received as a member of that body in which the Spirit of God has promised to abide,—which He has said he will make a living witness of the union that Christ has with the Father.

Yes! this is the promise to us and our children. And instead of using the fulfilment of that promise as if it were opposed to repentance and faith, I do not know how I am to exercise repentance or faith, how I am to exhort others to exercise them, if the promise has not been fulfilled. God forbid that I should mock any one by telling him to arise and go to His Father, if I do not believe he has one, that that Father is seeking

him continually by His Spirit. If we so think, God forbid that we should cease to warn ourselves and all others what a fearful contrast our actual condition presents to that condition of a family of brethren, which nevertheless is ours, and which we may claim if we will,—which we shall claim when we really repent and believe the Gospel. Do you think the family which rose up after the Day of Pentecost was some strange attempt under particularly felicitous circumstances to restore the simple pastoral life which the Book of Genesis describes to us? Why it started into existence in an old, corrupt, hateful city, torn by the most savage religious factions—a city against which the sentence of Divine doom had already gone forth, in which the greatest crime the world ever saw had just been committed. There in the midst of that effete, worn-out society, did a few Galilean men and women, the chief of whom had a short time before denied Christ to a maid-servant, exhibit the pattern of a Divine family. There did that society begin which has spread itself throughout Europe, and has delivered it from barbarism. And why, but because they believed what you and I say that we believe. Because being baptized into that Name into which we are baptized, they acknowledged that they were adopted by the Father, united in the Son, inhabited by the Spirit. Brethren, let us not expect that any new Pentecost will be given us to be a fresh warrant for that acknowledgment. The first Christian Pentecost is warrant enough for it; if



we do not make it on that ground we shall never make it at all. Unless we make it, society will become every day more corrupt and more divided. Statesmen will labour to preserve it, and will find it crumbling under their hands; revolutionary patriots will try to reform it, and will see every ancient abuse reappearing under the shadow of the securities devised against them. One way remains; it is God's way; let us confess that we have made ourselves the slaves of a spirit of division and hatred, and the spirit of love and peace given us in our baptism will renew us and make us one again.

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## SERMON IV.

NATURE, LAW, EDUCATION.

THE CATECHISM.

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Preached in Lincoln's Inn, Third Sunday in Advent, December 6, 1849.

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## ROMANS VI. 14.

*For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*

OF the opposition between grace and nature I have spoken in former sermons. I tried to shew you that it is not an artificial, technical distinction, but one which meets us at every turn in practical experience; that it belongs to the region of politics as much as of theology; that without it we cannot understand our own individual life, or solve any great social problems.

The text I have just read to you brings another contrast before us. In it Grace is not opposed to *Nature*, but to *Law*. This contrast is drawn out at great length, and presented to us under many aspects, in the Epistle to the Romans. The Apostle speaks of it in connexion with the whole course of God's dealings with mankind. He speaks of it as brought out into tremendous clearness and distinctness in his own mind by conflicts which had passed there. In the passage before us he concentrates the principle which he is teaching throughout his letter, and presents it



in the most startling shape to the mind of his readers. ‘Sin,’ he says, ‘shall not have dominion over you.’ Why? Because there is a law to punish it? Because that law is made known to you in the fulness of its strength and of its terror? Because you are made to feel that there is no escape from this law? These would seem very natural reasons to allege why a man should abstain from sin. These have been the contrivances of men to prevent it. These contrivances would seem to be grounded, if Jewish history, or, indeed, if any history is true, upon Divine principle and precedent. Yet St. Paul assigns precisely the opposite reason for sin not having dominion. ‘For ye are *not* under the law, but under grace.’ Just so far as you are *not* living in the sight of a mountain burning with fire; just so far as you are *not* perpetually haunted with the sense of terrors present and to come; just so far as you confess and believe that you are under an entirely gracious government,—just so far will you be able to resist the attractions of sin and maintain your freedom from it. A very wonderful assertion certainly, one which requires the most careful consideration; for if it is not one of the deadliest of falsehoods, it must be the most living and pregnant of truths. All morals and jurisprudence, above all, education, must stand in the most intimate connexion with it.

If we look strictly at the words, ‘Sin shall not have dominion over you,’ we shall, perhaps, arrive at the clearest apprehension of the Apostle’s

meaning. He does not speak of sin as an act, or a series of acts, not even as a feeling, or a state of feeling. He speaks of it as a power, as a tyrant. There is a something that claims the mastery over me, that assumes the right to tell me what I shall do, and what I shall not do. Every one knows it to be so. A hundred different names, such as ‘taste,’ ‘inclination,’ ‘appetite,’ may be given to this power; but no one practically doubts that there is such a one, that it is near to himself, and to every human being. And nearly every one owns, in one way or another, that this inclination, or taste, or appetite, does very often at least draw him out of the straight way, out of the way which his deliberate judgment declares to be the right one. That is just the fact which St. Paul recognises. The words which he uses for ‘Sin’ here, the words for ‘Transgression,’ ‘Iniquity,’ ‘Unrighteousness,’ elsewhere, though they have different shades of signification, shades which required to be noted, yet have this general, radical sense; all suppose deflection, the departure from some state in which we are intended to be. And however strange it may seem to connect a word of this kind with the notion of dominion or government, yet we are forced to do it. We cannot describe what we see in others, and what we experience in ourselves, unless we combine these two forms of expression.

If so, the sin which St. Paul here describes must be closely connected with that *nature* of which he speaks elsewhere. A man following



nature becomes the servant of sin, that is to say, he goes out of the way which was intended for him. A habit or a tendency which should have been under his rule, becomes his master. He is dragged along by it; he becomes its tool, its instrument. The more he is so, the lower he sinks; the more incapable he is of rising.

Now, against this sin St. Paul says, Law utters its thunders. It denounces all those overt-acts into which this inclination leads a man. It tells him that these overt-acts are rebellions against the society in which he is placed—are treasons against the Lord of that society. It tells him that to every crime He has affixed a righteous recompence. It tells him that right must be asserted; that evil must be punished, and put down; that if *he* is doing evil, *he* must be punished, and put down. But in telling him this, it has told him much more. In saying the evil *deed* must be avenged, it makes the man consider. ‘And who am I, the *doer*? How do I stand to Him who has fixed these eternal decrees which cannot be broken? Why is it that He takes me apart, and says, “*Thou* shalt not do this, *thou* shalt not do that?” Why does He single me out of the whole universe, and make me understand that I am responsible to Him; that I am standing before His judgment-seat?’ This is the awful meaning and effect of law. In this way does it proclaim itself to every human being as righteous, and true, and holy. In this way does it make every human being shudder at that which it reveals to him of

himself. In this way does it give him at one and the same moment a sense of his own fixedness, of his own personality, of his own immortality; and a conviction that there is an evil and a curse close to him, which is ‘bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh.’

Of this law it is that St. Paul affirms with such boldness, that it is utterly powerless to deliver a man from the yoke of evil; that it has not, and was never intended to have, any such office; that what it does is to discover to a man the thraldom he is in, not in the very least degree to break it. He considers its worth immense, unspeakable. He never for a moment denies its perpetual authority, its eternal obligation. So long as there are evil deeds done in the world, so long, for the sake of society, must there be punishment, severe, certain, unsparing. So long as there is a flesh in man disposing him to these evil deeds, so long, for the sake of the man himself, must there be a law denouncing that punishment against him, making him feel that he is liable to it. So long as there is an evil Spirit prompting that flesh, so long must law and punishment go on as a witness that the righteous God, and not the evil Spirit, is Lord of the universe. Surely nothing can be so contrary to St. Paul’s doctrine, or St. Paul’s spirit, as the feeble, unmanly, ungodly habit of denouncing punishment, whether inflicted by the single executioner of the State’s justice, or by its armed hosts, as if it were contrary—so the phrase runs—to the mild spirit of the Gospel.



The spirit of the Gospel asks no compliments of such a kind. The spirit of the Gospel, or, as we say, the Spirit of God, aims at the extirpation of evil, has not the least more tolerance for it than the law has. It leaves the evil nature, the flesh of which St. Paul speaks, to the law, its terrors, and its vengeance. It offers itself to that spirit in man which wrestles with the flesh, which is contrary to it; it promises that spirit emancipation. It says, 'Sin shall not have dominion over *thee*; for *thou* art not under the law, but under grace.'

We cannot hope to understand the sense in which St. Paul tells the Romans that they were not under the law, but under grace, if we overlook these considerations. Those who think that laws and punishments belong to some old Jewish economy, and not to the Gospel age, must look upon Christianity as a purely ideal conception of what man ought to be, not as a revelation of what he is; for it is clear that there is an evil nature in us, just as there was in Jews and heathens; and one would suppose, if the methods of God are uniform, that what was the right treatment of that evil nature at one time, is the right treatment of it at every time. Nor could the cravings of our hearts be satisfied if it were otherwise. They do not ask for mercy upon the evil that is in them; they count it their enemy; they desire to be raised out of it. The Gospel of God meets them with the assurance that what they desire has been accomplished, that God has redeemed them in His Son at once from the dominion of the flesh, and

from the curse of the law which inseparably belongs to it. 'What the law could not do,' it says, 'in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' Those who walk after the flesh are elsewhere described as disobedient, rebellious, *therefore* they are under the law. The law condemns their inclinations, and therefore condemns them. Those who walk after the Spirit are those who yield themselves to God's guidance, who boast of no powers or energies of their own, but seek to be possessed and directed by the Divine energy. In other words, such persons confess themselves to be under grace; they acknowledge that they are wholly and absolutely dependent upon the grace of God for all their powers to act, to suffer, to be. They live by faith, that is, by trust in the living God, not in themselves. They look up to Him to overcome the powers which are striving with them, and to which they would be naturally in subjection. They find what they seek. Sin lies at their door, but it has not dominion over them.

If this statement is a true one, you cannot suppose that the state of grace in which such persons confess that they are, is one that they have created for themselves by their faith in it, or by walking in it. Those words would lose all their force, they would become monstrous, self-contradictory words, if you put this sense into



them. Faith must be in that which is, not in that which is not. It denotes a foregone conclusion; it supposes a truth to be believed in; it imports a renunciation of the self-willed desire to make anything for ourselves. Walking in a state imports of course conformity to it;—a state must exist, we must be in it, before such conformity is possible. Therefore St. Paul never speaks of our being justified by faith, or walking in the Spirit, without speaking at the same time of God as our Justifier; of God sending His Son to take our nature upon Him, that He might justify us; of God sending His Spirit into our hearts that we may walk according to His will. In strict conformity with which language he speaks of our ‘putting on Christ in baptism; of our being buried with Him in baptism.’ This simple act is treated as God’s acknowledgment of us as being in the state into which He has brought humanity by the incarnation and death of His Son; an acknowledgment on the part of those who receive baptism that they are in a state of grace, and not of nature; that they are under grace, and not under law; and therefore that sin need not, and should not, have dominion over them.

I have spoken enough of the principle. I proceed now to one special application of it. Education has been felt in all ages and countries to be a battle with certain inclinations which degrade us, and make us savages. It has been felt to be the awakening, or calling out of something in a child which is not brutal, which belongs to it

because it is human. But the same difficulty arose here which we traced elsewhere. If Education was to resist Nature it seemed as if it had no choice but to be artificial. It seemed as if our business was to form the minds of our children according to some pattern of ours. But the question arose, ‘What is the right pattern?’ Each new projector had his own; there was a conventional one which belonged to each country, and to a different class in each country. The same philosopher who, at the end of the last century, called for a return to Natural Society, called also for a return to Natural Education. And that call was listened to by many who did not heed the other—so manifold were the falsehoods which he was able to point out in our schemes of discipline; so much did the conscience of fathers and mothers respond to a number of his protests. That the conventions of the world around us are no ground for Education—that our Education ought to aim at making a child superior to them, and independent of them, he demonstrated with a power derived more from facts and reason than from his own extraordinary eloquence.

But there was another view of the subject. Our schools had perceived that *law* is a mighty power; they had required punishment as a no less necessary and righteous instrument for a society of boys than for one of men; no less necessary and righteous for the individual boy than for the individual man. One part of the



witness which the new teachers bore, and which began to be borne also in many quarters where their doctrines had not penetrated, was against the Spartan discipline which it was alleged had been substituted for all higher moral influences in the older schools. Much was said about the heart and the affections; how that which speaks to them is more effectual than all coercive methods; how easy it is almost to dispense with the one, if we make a continual and legitimate use of the other. These assertions, like the former, derived their greatest strength from the evidences which could be produced that punishment had failed of accomplishing the end at which it aimed; that the obvious resource of remedying its failures by increasing its severity, strengthened the crime; that evil acts were not greatly checked; that evil habits were not in any degree counteracted. The supporters of the opposite method could also bring positive proofs of its utility. They could shew that hearts had been softened by kindness which had been proof against sternness; that there is that in us which confesses a mysterious attraction towards a person who is mild, gracious, and belligerant. These facts were so clearly established, and so important, that one cannot help regretting they should have lost much of their influence, on English minds especially, through the conviction, which all the words and acts of the speakers, and all the results of their teaching fostered and deepened, that no strong character could be formed by the discipline they recommended; that a firm,

energetic will, the sense of obedience, the capacity of governing—all the qualities which enable men to till the earth, and to subdue it—cannot be looked for except in those who have been practically instructed in the obligation of law, and the inevitable connexion of punishment with transgression.

How to reconcile views which seem so opposite, how to find a practical way of carrying out the true principle which is evidently involved in each, must be a great question for one who is called to teach, and is not unwilling to learn. I cannot help thinking, brethren, that the principle of reconciliation is contained in the manual in which all children brought up in our Church are instructed. Every one who repeats that Catechism is told that he is a child of grace; that he has been made a member of Christ, a child of God, the inheritor of a heavenly kingdom. He is declared to be in a state of salvation; he is bidden to give God thanks for it. Being in that state, and on that ground, he can resist the powers which will seek to draw him out of it, to make him a natural brute beast, or the mere creature of an artificial civilisation, or the subject of a more inward, radical, spiritual depravity. The world, the flesh, and the devil, he is told plainly, are fighting against him, and will fight against him to the end. But these powers shall not have dominion—for he is baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; he can look up to God when the evil spirit claims to be his master, and say, ‘I believe in the Father Almighty.’



When the pomps and vanities of the world are bringing him into bondage he can say, ‘I believe in Him who was born of the Virgin, and was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and who has overcome the world.’ When the flesh is asserting its tyranny, and trying to stir him up to selfish thought, and divisions, he may say, ‘I believe in the Holy Ghost, who has brought me into a divine family, who promises to unite me, and all its members, in one communion, who gives me forgiveness, and enables me to forgive, who will raise up my body, and give me that life of which I have been declared an inheritor.’

But since we want to know what are the acts to which the world, and the flesh, and the devil, would lead us, then comes forth the law in all its old distinctness, in all its old power, warning men of the things which tend to death ; to the destruction of societies, and of every one’s moral life. The Catechism tells the child that it is not under the Law, but a child of grace, God’s child, redeemed, justified, endowed with God’s Spirit. But if it forgets its calling it may come under that Law ; if it does not claim its true state, then it will sink into a false, rebellious state ; and against that, the Law still utters its voice as in the time of old. But this righteous voice we know proceeds from a Father, from one whom we call *our Father*, who has loved us and redeemed us, who can teach us to hallow His name, and live under His kingdom, and do His will, and receive our daily life from Him, and forgive trespasses, and come out

of temptation, and triumph over evil. In token of which divine purpose He has brought us into the covenant of baptism, and will, in due time, give us a divine nourishment to sustain us amidst all perils, to fit us for all toils, and to raise us into the knowledge and enjoyment of the full blessedness which He desires us to attain.

I am not going now into the question whether the postulate on which all this teaching is grounded, is one which we are authorised to make. That point I have considered twice already. I am only anxious now to impress this thought upon you, that if this is a fair assumption, if we have a right to treat our children as children of grace, and not of nature, as under grace, and not under law, some of the greatest difficulties which beset the subject of education would be removed, and a simple line marked out for us—a line not now for the first time discovered—one in which our fathers walked before us ; though it would be strange if our experience of different attempts to depart from it did not make the starting-point, the direction, and the end of it, clearer to us than it was to them. What we want, I believe, for the correction of the severities into which the guides of instruction in former days have fallen, is not the disuse of punishment, the suspension of government, the adoption of a more democratic order in our schools, but the more distinct recognition of what those beings are upon whom the discipline is exercised, and for what ends it is appointed. It makes all the difference whether we suppose a living creature



who is committed to us is to be made right by punishment, is to obtain dominion over his appetites by law, or whether we regard him as one not under Law—a creature with a heart and spirit to which God is speaking, whom he is calling forth into knowledge and love, whom he is using all human instruments to cultivate, who can bring forth good fruits because he has God's Spirit helping and inspiring him continually, but who has also an evil nature against which God's laws and punishments are directed, and against which man, as God's minister, is to direct his laws and his punishment. Schoolmasters may well, as Herbert says, 'deliver us to laws,' and do us the highest and most blessed service by undertaking that work, if there has been a previous instruction in the father's house—by the mother's voice—that men are members of God's family, and if we are brought to understand that this is not a blasphemous fiction, but a reality which is to be carried out in every stage of our after life. To speak truth, and hate everything false and artificial, must be much more the lesson to a Christian than it was to a Persian child, because he stands in so much closer a relation to the God of truth. But because he hates what is false he will renounce that nature of his which is always inclining him to falsehood, he will cling to that grace which proceeds from Him in whom is both grace and truth. The reverence for law should not be so strong in a Spartan child as in a child of the Church. He can reverence it because it is not his master, because he is not

obliged to hate it for the horrible sentence which it seems to pronounce upon him. We should never forget—St. Paul works out the point most elaborately in the Epistle to the Galatians—that Law did not speak first to man. The family of Abraham, he says, was under God's Covenant 400 years before it was subjected to law—that was added because of transgressions. All God's education, as it is set forth in the Bible, has proceeded upon this principle. He does not begin with teaching men of sin, but with teaching them of grace. Sin came out as the resistance to grace; then where sin abounded grace was found much more to abound, and to be the cure of it. In our education we have been much in the habit of forgetting the first truth, and dwelling only upon the second. Religious people suppose that every kind of effort must be used to make a child feel its sin, that so it may appreciate God's mercy in sending it a deliverer. I cannot but think that such a method has produced, and must produce, premature self-consciousness, then hypocrisy, then infidelity or despair.

To realize evil without first apprehending good; to understand the departure from a moral order, when we are not told that we have any connexion with it; to be bidden to repent, when we do not know whom we have grieved; this must be a contradiction out of which only the most fatal mischiefs can come. They become visible when the intellect is beginning to be aware of its own strength, and is going forth to explore nature,



or the laws of man's being, or the conditions of national existence. Then it seems as if the lore of childhood had nothing to do with the apprehensions and desires of manhood ; as if it had demanded of us simply a contemplation of our own acts and feelings. From that contemplation we have gained nothing but pain, discontent, restlessness, while there is a whole universe lying about us, with which, as spiritual beings, it seems we have no concern. What is the issue of this strife in the majority of cases ? A devotion to some one of the pursuits which are called secular with a feeling that it is merely secular, and that only secular ends can be attained by it ; here and there temporary zeal in the study itself ; material interests soon supplanting that zeal in the hearts of nearly all. On the other hand, those who devote themselves to what they call the study of religion are exceedingly apt to substitute the worship of their own souls, that is to say, of themselves, for the worship of God ; to make the work of converting men to the faith of Christ a kind of trade, into which earthly ambition largely enters, and to leave the impression upon the minds of onlookers that the Church is not a more comprehensive and human fellowship than the world, but a narrower, closer, more exclusive corporation. Oh ! brethren, is it not time to bethink ourselves how we can set to rights a system of things which is keeping us apart from each other, which in our inmost hearts we feel to be wrong, which the coming generation will cast aside, perhaps that

it may give itself up to utter unbelief ? Is it not time to ask ourselves whether we cannot return into the older and more excellent way which we have fancied it was the highest wisdom to desert ? Is it not time to give over talking about the dogmatic teaching of the Church,—making it a watchword for party agitation,—and with all our hearts to consider the beauty of the Church's teaching as exhibited in the Catechism, in that it is not formal, not dogmatic, but living and personal, in that it speaks to each child by its own Christian name, reminds it what that name signifies, declares to it the infinite treasures of which the peasant, as much as the noble, has been made possessor ? If we lay this foundation for the education of those who are to form the next age, with what comfort may we look forward to any earthquakes that may be appointed for it ! How certain we may be that there will be that strength in it to act and to endure which has been so much wanting in our own ! How confidently we may expect that a real Christian family will be created out of the chaos of parties in which we are dwelling ! How surely will the accidents of birth, rank, property, be felt to be utterly insignificant compared with that humanity which all inherit together ! How surely will these accidents be looked upon as trusts committed to a few for the good of all ! How will all gifts and powers of thought be regarded and valued only on the same ground, for the same end ! But how much more precious will these gifts and powers be than they



have ever been! How shameful it will be thought to leave them uncultivated; how shameful to limit the field of their exercise; to say that the whole of God's universe is not intended for the Christian man to study and to use for the glory of his Father! When we look upon ourselves as redeemed, we shall look upon the whole creation, though groaning and travailing, as sharing in the Redemption, as destined hereafter to enter into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

## SERMON V.

## CONFIRMATION.

Preached at Lincoln's Inn, December 23, 1849.

## ROMANS VIII. 16.

*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.*

THE great objection which is made to our Baptismal Service, by those who understand themselves best, is always this: 'We are spiritual, voluntary creatures; it is the spirit or will alone which asks to be regenerated, which is capable of regeneration. How dare you affirm of an unconscious subject that it has been regenerated?'

The ground upon which I have defended that Service, is precisely that upon which this attack proceeds. I admit the premiss. Man is a voluntary or spiritual being. I dare not affirm less of any human creature. I dare not look upon an infant born of human parents and say, 'This is a mere animal.' My conscience is utterly shocked and revolted if I do; I am certain that the conscience of every man, if he fairly states the proposition to himself, is revolted by it. And not merely my conscience, but my experience and observation are outraged by such an assertion. Signs of a *will* do from the very first manifest themselves in the child. You feel sure that *that* is to be its characteristic mark among all creatures, that



whatever else it has not, unless it is hopelessly idiotic, this it must have. We have read of the American girl who was from her birth deficient in three senses, who had only one in any strength. That girl, before a single one of her faculties had been awakened by her benevolent and devoted guardian, gave manifest tokens of a will. She was a spirit, though nearly all the avenues by which the spirit converses with the external world were closed. The teacher acted in the faith that she was one, and his faith did not deceive him. Consciousness then is not the ground of our spiritual being, but our spiritual being is the ground of our consciousness. It is utter inversion and confusion to change this relation, to suppose that we are made spirits when we begin to exercise the powers which we could not exercise if we were not spirits. No doubt there is a deep mystery in this subject; how can any thing that concerns the will not be mysterious? It is the mystery of all mysteries. Every ancient philosopher acknowledged it to be so: if modern philosophers do not, it is only because they are less honest, less conversant with realities, more ready to suppose that they have got rid of a difficulty when they have found a formula in which they can express it. But does the difficulty become greater, does the mystery look more like a practical contradiction, because I believe that God has not formed this will, this spiritual being, and left it to unfold itself unmurtured, unintended, the sport of all accidents which it is meant to govern, of all powers which are

threatening to destroy it? Is it so absolutely necessary to your reason and conscience to believe that the will must grow up in a condition of slavery, that is to say, in a condition in which all its acts are anomalous and monstrous? Is it a frightful outrage upon all your notions of divine order, that He should have redeemed this spirit out of its natural slavery, that He should have said, ‘It is mine?’ Does it make you shudder and turn pale if you are asked to believe that He has done this, not for a picked spirit here and there, but for that race which He had formed in His own image? Or if this does not shock you, on general grounds of reason, does it shock you specially as Christian men, because you are taught to believe that Christ took the nature of man upon Him, and presented that nature as a holy and perfect sacrifice to His Father? Is it because you hold that conviction so strongly that you cannot bear me to say, ‘I claim for this particular child of mine that it should not be regarded as a spirit created for separation from all that is good and blessed?’ But if not, what resource have I but to fall back upon this offensive word, to say, ‘I do not look upon it as born of blood, of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man. I claim for it the name and title of a child of God?’

If the grounds upon which I have maintained this language are tenable, you feel at once that it must connect the future with the present. I have no doubt that the child is a spirit, because I have no doubt that a man is latent in that child. The



more all the powers of manhood develop themselves, the more all the perils of manhood begin to be felt and realized, the more have I a right to be confident that my assumption was a true one. How little the divine part of it, that which I owe to the revelation of Christ, can be affected by the subsequent ill-doings of the baptized person, how every one of these ill-doings will be as much a witness for it as the most uniform course of purity and devotion, I have often remarked before. To-day my object is to consider how this subject bears upon the rite of *Confirmation*, and in what way that rite has become one of the institutes or ordinances of the Christian family. Evidently the name points to a blessing already conferred. That which is not yet given to us, cannot be confirmed. Evidently also the Confirmation must correspond in its kind and character to that which has preceded it. If the Baptism has been merely an act of faith on the part of the parents, or a formality on the part of the Church, the other Service will be so likewise. If the first act claims to be an expression of the Divine Will, the other must put forth something of the same pretension.

The mediaeval Church felt this to be the case; therefore it raised Confirmation to the dignity of a sacrament. Luther felt it also, therefore he was inclined to throw aside Confirmation. His very disparaging language respecting it was caused by a jealousy for the dignity of the Scriptures, and of those two sacraments which were directly instituted by our Lord. He thought that all the five

which had been raised to their level ought to be deposed. He could not see what meaning Confirmation would retain, what moral and spiritual worth would belong to it, if it suffered that fall. He was not satisfied with any of the merely inferential arguments in support of it which had been deduced from Scripture, the chief of which is that the Holy Ghost was not given to the inhabitants of Samaria, who had been baptized by Philip the deacon, till the Apostles Peter and John had laid their hands on them. He was startled by the low view which such an argument, if fully carried out, would seem to involve of the baptismal sacrament. As the difficulty of obtaining bishops in the Protestant communities became evident, his dread of such a conclusion would be likely to increase. He shrunk from assigning such great authority to a tradition of the Church, as the acknowledgment of Confirmation, merely on account of a long usage, would imply. How many abuses which he had learnt to look upon as parts of a Babylonian system, might be justified on the same plea! I cannot think that his successors in our day, who attach great importance to this rite, disconnecting it of course with any notions respecting episcopal imposition of hands, have understood his difficulties, or disposed of them. They have rather regarded the whole subject from another point of view, treating the act of Confirmation, as it is perhaps their inclination to treat most acts, rather in the light of a confession of our faith, or as a venerable and legitimate means of seeking



divine assistance, than as either lawfully or unlawfully assuming to itself the character of a divine ordinance.

With the earnest desire of the great Reformer, not to trench upon the dignity of the two sacraments, not to infringe upon the authority of the written word, not to be restrained by any prescription from resisting that which he felt to be at variance with the divine command, we are bound heartily to sympathize. Forced to go back to first principles, to declare that God was actually speaking to men, and that the sounds of human voices, neither in that day nor in any past day, must be allowed to stifle His voice, he had a right to be suspicious of all forms and institutions which seemed to be ecclesiastical rather than divine. Experience had not shewn him that the same danger may come forth in another form. He did not know that God may be kept out of his own universe by the notion that His voice is only heard in a book. He did not know that all the power of that book, all the mighty testimony to a living God, and to His continual kingdom which it bears, may be suppressed under the pretence of exalting its mere decrees. He might indeed have observed that the substitution of the first-day sabbath for the seventh day, a change which he certainly would not have been willing to revoke, (for no one would have dreaded more a return to merely Jewish practice,) did not rest upon any more direct command of Scripture than this rite of Confirmation. He might therefore have asked himself whether

some very important novelties, novelties affecting the whole order and frame-work of society, and touching upon the most divine principles, must not have been established in conformity with the principles rather than with the letter of the divine Oracles. He might have considered whether the new sect of Anabaptists, which he dreaded so much, and which was at that time putting forth so tremendous a power in Germany, was not asserting *some* truth which the Church could not afford to ignore, great as the falsehoods and evils might be with which it was accompanied, and whether Confirmation had not this evidence in its favour, that if it were taken away, an old and practical attempt to reconcile their principle with that which is involved in Infant Baptism, would be declared ineffectual, though no other was substituted for it. But as I hinted, it is rather a prolepsis to suppose that these considerations could have much weight in the mind of Luther, seeing that three centuries of experience have been necessary in order to make them bear with any great force upon ourselves.

The time is come, I think, when the practice which has been sanctioned for so many ages will explain itself, and vindicate for itself a very high derivation and authority, by the necessities which it meets, by the perplexities which it removes. If Confirmation raises itself to the level of Baptism, it simply sets aside its own meaning. Instead of gaining strength, no strength is left to it. The words which describe the meaning and the cere-



mony itself have lost their significance together. But there may be something in the nature of Baptism which demands another act to carry out and fulfil its intention. There may be the greatest danger of an act which imports a spiritual relation, being supposed to belong to a single moment of our existence, when it should stretch its power and mystery over the whole of it. If it is our duty, from the earliest infancy, to believe that we are dealing with a spirit, and that God has adopted that spirit, and that He has given His Spirit to be its guide, it must follow that He is beginning an education which He will carry on. Unconsciousness cannot be in His eyes the holiest state. He will not leave that little creature in it. He will cause it in due time to become conscious, to pass through all the perils of consciousness. It must become conscious of its own evil nature,—conscious of a law which is rebuking that nature. And surely this cannot be all. It is not meant to stop at the point where all is bewilderment and confusion. It must be intended to emerge out of this consciousness of mere strife and war; to be more and more sure that the Reprover is a friend; to hear more and more audibly the Spirit witnessing with its spirit that it is a child of God. All this is evidently supposed in the very idea of a spiritual creature redeemed by God. And yet all this is most apt to be forgotten by us all. A certain blessing is supposed to be conferred once; the child is believed for an instant to be put into a condition which it is liable by its first acts and

efforts of thought and will to lose; we half mourn over the departure of what we call its beautiful infantine innocence; we look with jealousy, distrust, and terror, upon every act of energy and freedom—the acts which bear testimony to its human dignity, to its sense, however imperfectly awakened, of a divine parentage; we had rather there was no struggle with the powers of darkness, though to struggle with them is the very end for which we were sent into the world, though the Holy One, who says, ‘Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me,’ was struggling with them throughout all the days of his humiliation. This cowardice, effeminacy, faithlessness, shew clearly enough that the mere baptizing of a child does not express to our minds the full idea of baptism, as it is set forth in Scripture; we want something not to make baptism more complete, but to shew how complete it is; not to explain away or mitigate the idea into which it had led us of the child’s glory and blessedness; but to prevent the idea from being changed into a very low, poor, ungodly conceit of our own. We are apt to fancy that God has adopted our infant into his covenant, and then that He has resigned the care of it to human parents and Church-doctors, who are to do what they can that it may receive a proper amount of instruction and discipline, and may not wholly lose the gift which it has received, or may be put in the way of recovering it. Accordingly parents and doctors work on in a kind of half despair, confessing at every moment how much too strong



the old Adam is for all their efforts ; feeling that if those efforts were more continuous and unceasing, more might be accomplished ; but not finding that under such conditions, with such prospects, steady energy is possible. Meantime, the subjects of their education feel oftentimes as if an oppressive burden of practices and formalities were laid upon them, which may, no doubt, work out some good in future ; but at present causes them only weariness, and a sense of hypocrisy. Would it be so, brethren, if the teacher felt that this heavy impossible work has not been left to him at all ; that the Being from whom he receives his commission is really, from first to last, the one Educator of his children ; that we are only to study His ways, to consider how we may not thwart His intentions ; to labour that the seed may be put in at its appointed season,—may be left to rest quietly underground,—may not be disturbed by our impatient eagerness to see whether it is growing ? Would it be so if we habitually looked upon all evil tendencies, when they appear, precisely as we look at the weeds in a field or garden, to which every one has compared them, namely, as perfectly natural, quite to be expected, and yet as not the produce which belongs to that soil ; not as the right fruit of any seed which the great Husbandman has sown, but as degenerate plants, which a negligence we have to acknowledge and repent of, has suffered to appear ? Would it be so, if the child, instead of being taught a number of lessons about sacred things, and a number of

lessons about secular things, were taught to connect everything with the belief of a Father, and to refer itself first of all to Him ? Now Confirmation I look upon peculiarly as bearing this testimony. Taken in connexion with Infant Baptism, it declares that the whole ground of childhood and youth was under a divine culture ; that we all are what our Lord's parables describe us as being, mere labourers in the field or vineyard, employed from time to time, as He sees fit, in different parts of His work, acting well or ill, successfully or unsuccessfully, precisely as we remember or forget our position, are content to act as servants, with a perpetual sense of God's government over us, or are ambitious of inventing plans for ourselves, and think that we can make a living spirit better by casting it into a mould of our own. So looked at, this rite of Confirmation is surely not open to Luther's objection. It is not the Church putting itself in the place of God, or intercepting the communication between God and His child ; it is precisely the strongest protest against any such presumption—it is the Church's witness that God Himself is the child's Parent, and that her ministers fulfil their part only just so far as they disclaim any independent authority,—only just so far as they declare His actual rule, and their present as well as future responsibility. But so looked at, Confirmation can never be merely, what some of its recent apologists would make it to be, an act of conscious faith, on the part of the child, in God's promises. To be that, it must be more.



A living God must be the foundation of all our services, not only the end of them. If He is not with us, not in the midst of us, not acting upon us, the aspirations of our souls after Him are very hopeless, and will at last become very unreal or superstitious. No doubt superstition may reach us in another way. Our belief in effects proceeding from the imposition of human hands may become a very superstitious belief. It *must* become so, if we look at the human instrument in any other way than as an instrument. If we attach any sanctity to him in himself, for his own sake,—if we suppose any virtue to be enshrined in him, we shall fall under the lowest priesthood; just as the belief of a divine virtue residing in the person of the monarch brings us under the grossest kingcraft. But after trying many other deliverances from both dogmas we shall find, I believe, that the acknowledgment of God as the ever present Teacher and Ruler; from whom all power that is real is derived, and who alone makes any persons or any offices or ordinances effectual for communicating it to us, is the one satisfactory and effectual refuge. Reverence is so necessary to man, servility is so natural a counterfeit of it, that all loud utterances of contempt for dignities do but lead to a more ignominious prostration before them, or to the enthroning of some more despicable and hideous idol. Begin with reverence for the King of kings and Lord of lords; let Him be your fear, and Him be your dread, and you will find respect for all human powers through

which He shines forth, favourable to the growth of manly freedom; the best school for studying the words, and learning to repeat them in the face of Sanhedrims and governors, ‘Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.’ And so it is with all charms, enchantments, magic, in their old or new forms. Unbelief is no help against these. The most sceptical age is the one in which all things are held to be possible, because nothing is acknowledged as true; it is a time of cowardly apprehension, as well as of reckless vaunting. Believe that God is acting, and you dare not indulge in tricks, or impose the belief of them upon any one else. No calculation of the possible benefits that may come from a fraud can tempt you to consider it otherwise than as a blasphemy, to be confessed and repented of in sackcloth and ashes. I say then the Church does not promote the belief in any fantastic, irregular agency, proceeding from human hands, when she appoints that her bishop should regularly, at an appointed season, confirm all her baptized children. The universality of the ceremony, the number of persons who perform it, the fact that they mix in all the common business of life, and have no claims to a peculiar sanctity, destroy all the magical impressions connected with it, and at once bring us to the awful divine significance of it; to the truth that the great Father is indeed owning those whom He has regenerated, as His children, taking them out of the hands of subordinate teachers into His



own immediate service, enduing them with the powers necessary for that service.

These three views of the office are combined, I think, in our Prayer-Book. The child is recognised in the solemn and high character of a completely responsible being, not now for the first time adopted into God's covenant and grace, but now for the first time capable of fully understanding his adoption. Just at the time when he is breaking loose from parents and governors, just when he has the world lying before him, and the loving, home influence can no more be directly over him, and the stern school-law is no longer an object of fear; just when he may be going beyond the region of local, hereditary customs; away from national peculiarities, to see new forms of society, to mix with peoples of different tongues, formed in different schools of discipline in the wildness of nature, or in the various stages of a degenerate civilization; just then he is brought under the hand of one of those who are called fathers of the Church, who are the witnesses of its universality, and yet who are connected with all local, national, domestic associations, to receive a pledge that he is not leaving the past behind him, that he is the identical being who played in the nursery, who listened to tales that can never again be told, and felt the pressure of hands that, perchance, now are cold; and that he will be the same in all the dim, vague, future which is awaiting him; the same himself, under the care of the self-same parent; a member of the same

body; united to the same Lord, who for him became a child, and endured all the temptations of a man; accompanied by the same Mighty Indweller who has brought forth every thought and energy in him hitherto, and now is ready to bestow upon him all the higher gifts which are required for a larger intercourse with beings of the same race, for a more positive dominion over the things which are put in subjection under it.

This third aspect of the doctrine of Confirmation is that, I apprehend, which connects it with the passages of Scripture that have been somewhat hastily and loosely brought forward, as if they were a direct authority for it. Those who study the account of the events which followed the preaching of Philip and the laying on of the hands of the Apostles in Samaria, will perceive that the *new* blessing which they received—which their baptism did not at once express—was that of spiritual *gifts*. They spake with tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. If there had not been some palpable manifestation of this kind, Simon Magus would not have been so struck with the power, or have cared to purchase it. This is only one out of a number of passages which distinguish with great accuracy between the faculties which a man is enabled to exert through the power of the Spirit, and that Spirit itself. The difference is a radical one; it lies in the nature of things; we might be sure that in the divine order it would be denoted in some such manner as that which the story of



the Samaritan conversion points out. And if so, the distinction itself cannot belong, though some of its accidents may, to one period more than another; it must require to be set forth, as nearly as may be, by the same method in the 19th century as in the first. The Church, I believe, has preserved that method, and incorporated it in the rite of Confirmation, precisely as she has perceived the necessity of the alteration to which I alluded before, and has substituted for the Jewish Sabbath the Christian Lord's Day. I do not dispute the right or the duty of watching such inventions carefully; I do not deny that the same Church-authority which is pleaded for the Sunday and for Confirmation, is pleaded for the recognition of the Bishop of Rome as head of Christendom, and that texts may be produced to prove that one as well as the other is an element of the new dispensation. But, brethren, if we condemn these changes ever so much, we shall not prevent them. If no clearer eye than man's is watching them, we should have been overwhelmed by them long ago. It is surely safe to trust God to put down that which sets at nought the principle of His Church, that which wars with His word, and to sustain that which is carrying out the principle of the one, that which is in strict harmony with the letter and spirit of the other. If we will have a dispensation of statutes and decrees, we must give up the Christian, for it is not such an one; it is the revelation of principles which were lying hid under statutes and decrees; the setting up of a spiritual

kingdom. These principles can defend themselves; they have always defended themselves. Let the Popedom be, as we believe it to be, the direct contradiction, and counterfeit of the idea of Christ's kingdom, and past History the more earnestly it is read, and future revolutions, will pronounce God's doom upon it. Let Confirmation, or the Sunday, be likewise at variance with the idea of the Gospel and of God's kingdom, and that past History and those future revolutions will denounce them also. What I have endeavoured to shew you in this Sermon is that one of them—I have no need to argue about the other—has stood this test, and will stand it.

Controversies about Baptism exhibiting one and another side of its meaning; shewing one and another imperfection in our apprehensions of it; bringing difficulties to light—bringing our necessities to light,—have proved how the twin ideas of admitting infants to God's sacrament, and of confirming adults, sustain each other; how falsehood follows from the exclusive assertion of either; how hard it is to conceive either wanting, and yet to retain the first principles of the Gospel-covenant. In fact, it is a question of principle. All feel that Confirmation, as well as Infant Baptism, must be attacked, as implying a false idea; no one doubts that the ordinance is good, if the meaning of it is good. The field of argument, therefore, is much narrowed. We are not driven to antiquarian lore; it will help us very little. Half sentences of Scripture, even a long tradition, will not support



**Confirmation.** On the other hand, those half sentences, that long tradition, will come out into clearness when we really believe in the existence of a divine family; when we find that all Scripture is testifying of it, that all tradition implies it, and has either caught the mantle of its divinity, or has produced some patchwork in place of it.

We shall not be inclined to part with Confirmation when we have understood better what are our relations to our fellow-men, how untenable they are, except on a divine basis; when we know more what our intellectual powers signify, how impossible it is to use them for any worthy ends,—at last to use them at all,—unless they are impregnated with a divine life. We shall not wish to part with Confirmation if we consider how many a lonely student, fighting in his chamber with terrible enemies, meeting among his human teachers only hard, unintelligent, freezing looks—how many a wretched needlewoman, debating the question with herself whether she shall escape from a death of hunger to a death of sin—may be upheld by the recollection that this prayer has been offered, and will be answered: ‘Defend, O Lord, this thy child by thy heavenly grace, and keep it thine for ever;’ may learn to believe that the Spirit of Love and Power and Holy Fear, who was assured to them once, is with them still, binding them to a host of blessed and sympathising spirits, with whom they will dwell and worship for ever, when God Himself shall have wiped away all tears from off all faces.

## SERMON VI.

### THE VIRGIN MARY—MARRIAGE.

Preached in Lincoln's Inn, December 30, 1st Sunday after Christmas, 1849.

#### LUKE I. 28.

*And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured; the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.*

THE Gospel and the Epistle on Christmas-day had no reference to our Lord’s conception or birth. The first was taken from the opening of St. John’s Gospel, which speaks of the Eternal Word as the source of Life to all creatures, and as the Light of men. The passage ends with the announcement, ‘The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.’ But nothing is said respecting the method of this incarnation. The Epistle, which is taken from the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, speaks of the Son as of Him by whom the worlds were made, ‘the brightness of the Father’s glory, the express image of His person.’ Like the Gospel, it begins from an eternal ground; it assumes our Lord to have been always the Son of God. And though it dwells for a moment upon the fact that ‘He had by Himself purged our sins,’ this is only as a step to the declaration that ‘He had sat down at



the right hand of the Majesty on high.' In the second Lesson we have an account of Christ's birth, of the way in which it was proclaimed to the shepherds, of the songs of the heavenly hosts which celebrated it. But it is not till this Sunday after Christmas that the passage from St. Matthew, which sets forth His miraculous conception, is directly brought under our notice.

A different order from this would have been followed, I conceive, if these services had been composed either by Roman Catholics or Protestants in our time. No one can doubt for an instant that the main object of the former would have been to bring the Virgin directly before us on such a day as that, to connect the Child who was born, the Son who was given, with her, to dwell upon the difference between her and all others of her sex and race. 'Surely,' it would have been said, 'if there is one day in the year in which that mysterious fellowship between the Child and the Mother, which painters have striven to express, may be dwelt upon in all its strength, this is the day. There will be other times to speak of the glory of Christ's resurrection, of His ascension, of His union with the Father, of His kingdom among men. The manger at Bethlehem, and the human parent, have a right to precedence of all other thoughts on the festival of the Nativity.' Protestants would have arrived at nearly the same result by another process of reasoning. To exalt the Virgin-Mother would not have been a desire in their minds; but they would feel that

Christmas-day commemorates the human and earthly, rather than the mysterious and divine side of our Lord's being. 'It is the doctrine,' they would have said, 'of His being born of a woman that we are specially to deliver on this day. We may leave transcendent dogmas, if they are true, to establish themselves at other times and by other evidence: now we may surely occupy ourselves with the benefits which have resulted to our earth from the birth of Jesus Christ into it.'

We may understand the state of mind which is expressed by this language much better than that of the Romanists. But we must not forget that theirs seems to them, as much as ours seems to us, human and practical. To present an actual woman to us endued with every inward grace and beauty, as an actual object of faith, hope, devotion, as sympathising in human sorrow and human evil, in sorrows which have pierced through her own heart, in evils from which she is entirely free,—is it strange that this should seem a blessed escape from the dryness and formality of theological statements and controversies?

Is it strange that such an object should have a power which statements and controversies never can have? No one who studies the history of Mariolatry with any attention, and sees how, in its most extravagant forms, it was connected with the human feelings and the popular preaching of the Franciscans, how the most vigorous resistance to it came from the learned doctors and schoolmen of the opposing order, can doubt that it derives its



support from some of the very same feelings which induce people in Protestant countries to seek for what is concrete and personal, instead of what is abstract and formal. If, through one cause or another, heaven should be looked upon as cold, distant, separated from human sympathies, the forms of earth will be sought after as the real objects of devotion. The imagination may form visible and beautiful idols by blending these forms with dreams of the world which seems to have no existence for the waking man. Or we may accommodate the traditions of our infancy to the conditions of the earth about us, till we have made them as cold, as hard, as dreary, as any of the things with which we are daily trafficking. In the first case the images, which were once bright and fair, become continually more gross and sensualized, till at last they lose all power even over the hearts which try to reverence them. In the second case, the different forms and maxims of human society, which had in former days been connected with something divine, become more and more perplexing and unintelligible to us; we try to defend them by arguments of expediency, but these are discussed, questioned, at last proved futile. We try to get help from the old belief; but the substance which sustained it is found to have disappeared, and to have been supplied by a material which is rapidly crumbling away.

These would be sad reflexions if we thought that divine truth or human order depended upon man's contrivances or man's faith. Those who

believe that God is the upholder of both, can trust Him to bring good out of this seeming confusion, and to lead us back to those principles which we threw aside in hopes of arriving at certain immediate and practical results. There may come a time when men shall learn that the deepest theology is, after all, the most practical; that if we would have any fruits upon the earth's surface, we must dig down to the soil below. Then it will be seen that our fathers were not teaching formal propositions, however they, like us, might often be tempted to dwell in these, but were setting forth living persons and living relations which concern us, one and all, when they said that the Eternal Father spoke through his Son to human beings in all ages, and finally manifested that Son as His own perfect image, as the image after which He had made man. Such declarations may become cold and abstract as they pass through cold hearts and lips that have been touched by no coal from the altar. They may become cold and abstract when they are set forth merely in logical terms, not in and through Him who took our nature and dwelt among us. But when we see them growing and unfolding themselves, as they do in the acts and words of Holy Scripture, embodied in living services of devotion, connected with all human relations, they more and more approve themselves to the heart and reason of mankind, they more and more establish themselves by our experience of the superstitions and the confusions into which we fall when they are forgotten.



The idea of a miraculous conception and birth may be used for the sake of separating the Virgin from all other creatures, for the sake of establishing a claim on her part to a sinless nature, for the sake of disparaging Marriage, and proving that the name which she bears must be the most sacred of all. It *must* have this effect if it stands out isolated and solitary among the doctrines of the Gospel, if it is made the groundwork of them, if we suppose in any degree, or under any modification, that Jesus was the Son of God *because* He was born of the Virgin. A secret, unconfessed imagination of this kind worked itself silently into the hearts of the people, strengthened itself by the condescension of the priests to their earthly weakness, gained help from the lower, if it was checked by the higher and nobler, productions of Christian art, was fostered by every new feeling of sin and corruption and by the dread of appearing before a holy God. The Creeds of the Church bore steadfast and continual witness against this heresy; the belief that Marriage was a Sacrament seemed to be a counteraction of some of its worse consequences. But in time the doctrine of the sacramental character of Marriage came to mean little more than this, that the Church has power to make a union holy which would be otherwise unholy. The events of the Reformation which, in our country especially, were so closely linked with the question, whether any ecclesiastical power could rectify a marriage in itself unlawful, led men back to the original institution. Our Lord said in reference to Jewish arrangements and

indulgences, ‘From the beginning it was not so; God made them male and female.’ The words were felt to place marriage on another ground than that on which it had been placed. Its sacramental character was denied; but it was asserted to be meant for all, for clergymen as well as laymen. And along with this assertion came another which led more effectually to the same result. The old principle of an actual relation to the Son of God was proclaimed in the terms of the old Creeds, on the warrant of Holy Scripture; intervening mediators were disclaimed; it was declared to be impossible that He who had died for men could require the intercession of His mother to make Him propitious to them. The notion of a Queen of heaven was rejected, not as extravagant, but as impious.

For a time in those countries which the Reformation reached the belief remained strongly fixed in men’s minds, that Christ had hallowed all ordinary things, all earthly conditions, by taking our nature. A vigour and energy in the pursuits and vocations of civil life, such as characterised our own Elizabethan period, was the fruit of this conviction. But speedily these pursuits and vocations began to be valued for their own sakes; they were regarded as secular, and loved as secular. All baseness and corruptions were permitted and tolerated in them; these were supposed to be made less evil and mischievous because the Church gave them a kind of benediction. A protest was raised against such ten-



dencies. The religious man was bidden to fly from contact with the world and its habits. He looked to Christ as his deliverer from sin and from the earth. He forgot to think of Him as one who had come to make the earth and its works holy. Ordinary social institutions were spoken of as belonging to a mundane economy, as having no sanctity and divinity. Still an exception was made for that which belonged to the hearth and the household. Over these it was believed a mysterious grace still brooded. Marriage, it was confessed by the religious, (yet not without a half reluctance) had Christ's sanction and blessing upon it. The politicians regarded it as the most important of civil institutions; they would not despise any accidental advantage it might derive in the opinion of mankind from old religious associations. Thus it possessed a high but an insecure dignity, which the decay of domestic affections, the weakening of old habits, notorious instances of marriages formed for the meanest reasons in the highest circles, continually threatened. In religious minds the feeling that our Lord's birth was merely an exception in the world's history, weakened the feeling of the sacredness of other births, especially when everything in the actual history and condition of the world seemed to shew that they might be curses rather than blessings. Yet when some eagerly cast aside this belief, and endeavoured to bring Christ's birth under the same conditions as all others, what did they gain? Did they really

look upon marriage with more sacred and reverent eyes? Did the arguments of politicians and economists, the miseries of the poor, and the corruptions of the rich, shake their faith less than that of those who still adhered to the old persuasion?

There comes a time when all such questions force themselves on men's minds, and when the preacher must not, through any cowardice or false delicacy, shrink from them. So long as it is possible to regard men merely as the citizens of a particular soil, surrounded with old national traditions, so long there will be a reverence attached to Marriage, whether the grounds of it are understood or not. But experience has shewn, that neither sages nor common men, neither those who are possessed by a strong religious enthusiasm nor those who have cast off all religion, are safe from the most perilous theories and the most perilous practice in this matter, when they begin to contemplate human beings simply as such; when they begin to frame the conception of a general association or commonwealth. The noblest of Greek philosophers, the Nicolaitans of the first century,—who interpreted the words, 'None said that which he had was his own,' in its widest sense, in the sense which St. John says that he 'hated,'—the Anabaptists of Munster in the sixteenth century, the Familists of Amsterdam in the seventeenth century, the Communists of our own—all testify to the same fact. Yet who can dare to say that the grounds and conditions of a universal society must not be considered in this day; that



they can be overlooked and regarded merely as questions for the amusement of speculative men. Some universal society must put itself forth substantially in the world. It may be one which extinguishes national and family life. It may be one which justifies all family and national life. It must be one or the other. If we try to set them up merely on the ground of their beauty, their utility, their traditional worth, against the very darkest and most devilish conception of a universal community, we shall find that they fall in the conflict. We must ask whether they do not rest upon a firmer, a diviner foundation.

The belief of our Lord's Nativity has been made an excuse for disparaging the marriage-state, both by Romanists and Protestants. And yet I think both Romanists and Protestants have felt that an awful dignity has been put upon every child born into this world 'by the fact that He was actually born of a woman. The old painters had evidently this feeling, and they expressed the thought which was latent in thousands of other minds. They felt too (and this conviction may be seen dimly exhibiting itself even in the lowest and more grovelling acts of Mariolatry) that her glory consisted in being a woman—that, and nothing more. 'Hail, thou that art highly favoured among women,' is the angel's salutation. Her song shews that she felt it as a benediction conferred upon her sex and upon herself, as the lowly representative of it. That song, it must not be forgotten, is an exact

parallel to Hannah's song at the birth of Samuel, which is the expression of the simplest maternal feeling and rapture. We are told the lineage of Mary and of her husband, in whose person she acquired her civil rights and whose descent it would seem is of importance to her, surely that we may connect her with the whole life and history of the Jewish family—each female of which hoped that she might herself give birth to the Christ. We outrage, therefore, as well the conscience of mankind as the express letter and truth of Scripture, if we look upon our Lord's Nativity as in any sense whatever putting a slight upon the marriage-bond, and not rather as the greatest assertion of its meaning and sacredness. We should not doubt it was so if we followed the course of thought which, as I remarked at the beginning of my sermon, the Services of the Church suggest to us. If we really believed the Sonship of Christ to be a divine and eternal relationship, one which is the ground of all human relationships, we should feel that the received doctrine respecting the way in which the Son of God became man, and was manifested as man, was the simplest that we could adopt. Any other contains something which shocks the heart and conscience, something which limits the Universal Man to narrow, partial conditions, something which interferes with the full and clear recognition of Him as the only-begotten of the Father. But when we speak of that event which we have been used to consider strange and ano-



malous, as the most perfect carrying out and exhibition of the divine law and order, we at once remove any impression which interferes with the testimony of Scripture and the feeling of mankind respecting the Incarnation. We see that the *fact* is the only adequate manifestation of the principle. We feel that each marriage, each birth, under the new dispensation, has a higher worth, a deeper signification, a more perfect sanctity, than could have belonged to it under the old. The truth that God set forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons, lies beneath this oldest of God's institutes for man, ratifies it, glorifies it, pronounces all Manichean notions about it heretical, detestable, accursed.

Contemplated from this ground, the duty of the Church respecting Marriage, just as its duty respecting Confirmation, is not to put itself in the place of God, not to make something sacred which He has not made sacred, but to carry out His meaning and purpose, to shew forth His mind in its own acts. 'God instituted marriage in the time of man's innocence. Christ beautified the wedding at Cana in Galilee with His own presence.' These are the premises from which our office starts; it claims no power for the Church save that of blessing in His name. It declares that Marriage is no mere gratification of a natural instinct; that Marriage is not an ordinance of artificial society; that it belongs, like every other great human institute, to a gracious economy; that it, in an

especial manner, embodies and presents a divine Mystery. Beginning from heaven, it can speak simply, and bravely of that which belongs to earth. It discards the Manichean dogma once and altogether. It claims the whole region of human feelings and sympathies as a sanctified region. The higher mystery is not introduced for the sake of refinement, but for the sake of justifying God's laws, and men's conformity to them. This I believe is the right way of speaking and acting. I know no work which, on the whole, follows it out so honestly and so safely as our Marriage Service. Exceptions may be raised against parts of it, into which I do not mean to enter; for I am not taking the office of an apologist; but I do think that the more the principle upon which it rests is understood and recognised, the more shall we appreciate the wisdom and manliness of its forms and language.

I do not grieve, but rejoice, that the legislature of our country no longer demands the use of that service as the necessary condition of marriage among its citizens. I believe that this seeming concession to necessity was really the acknowledgement of a principle, and the deliverance from a falsehood which it was wrong for statesmen to enforce, and for clergymen to concur in. If there is that divine authority and divine significance in Marriage which we say that there is, we ought not to pretend that it cannot obtain an adequate and high sanction, though it does not receive its blessing from our lips. We dare not confound



the act of the minister with the act of God, or, what is more terrible still, substitute the minister for God. But we may contend all the more earnestly for this admission, that the civil ceremony would want its interpretation, would want the binding power which we thankfully believe it has, if there were not some testimony going forth continually that this union is no mere ceremony, no mere human arrangement. We may be the more zealous to maintain an ordinance in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, for the whole body of which that name is the bond and the foundation, because we recognise heartily and ungrudgingly the sacred obligation of every rite by which every sect has borne witness that it feels marriage to be grounded on a divine commandment, and to need or to deserve a heavenly benediction. As our service appeals with tremendous force to the conscience against all the abuses of this holy ordinance, which the upper classes in every country have been wont to tolerate and to perpetuate, so does it hold out a great hope that, sometime or other, it shall become, in spite of the monstrous evils of our present condition, and in spite of all the theories of economists, that infinite blessing to the poor man which God means it to be. The command which went forth on the creation-day, which was repeated to those who offered the sacrifice for a restored world, has not lost its meaning and virtue except through our sin—through our low estimate of God's gracious purposes to us. Mere prudential maxims or habits,

taken by themselves, can be no remedy for the evil which we are suffering. A return to a true and righteous appreciation of the sanctity of a bond, which religious men have despised through selfish spiritual ambition, upon which political men have cast disgrace, because they have thought it better to charge God foolishly than to suspect themselves of any wrong doing, must be a main instrument of the reform which all feel to be necessary, which all are trying in some way to effect. Association for outward purposes will be possible, will be safe, will be stronger than individual rivalship, when it begins not in the contempt of domestic obligations, but in the recognition of them, in an earnest effort to restore and strengthen them. That effort will be successful when we come really to believe that the Everlasting Son of God took upon Him to redeem man, and that for that end He did not abhor the Virgin's womb.



## SERMON VII. VISITATION OF THE SICK.

Preached in Lincoln's Inn, the Epiphany, January 6, 1850.

### HEBREWS XII. 7, 8.

*If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.*

IT is thought by some that the poetical or creative power belongs less to our age than to some of the foregone ages. Perhaps those who make the remark are not well agreed as to the sense which they attach to this faculty. If it is one which merely carries us away from actual life and suffering into a fancy world, we may believe that God withholds it because we have no leisure for the exercise of it. The woes which force themselves upon the notice of all of us, if we are ever so much resolved to turn away from them, are so distinct and so appalling, those which lie beneath the surface are so continually forcing themselves upwards, and shaking the ground at our feet, that it is not easy to surrender ourselves to pictures of sorrows or joys which are merely possible. The first look very tame when contrasted with those which we know

to exist. The others look like the most impudent mockeries. But if this great gift in other days enabled those who strongly possessed it, to shew their contemporaries the meaning and reality of the things which they were wont lightly to pass by, which they gladly winked at; if it is not a playing for children, but an instrument for enabling men to penetrate into the very heart of the good and the evil which lies about them, there seems no reason why we should expect it to be less freely bestowed upon our generation than upon our forefathers. Nor would facts warrant any such conclusion. If the clearest, most vivid pictures of human misery were adequate to produce any earnest sympathy with it, any steady efforts for the relief of it, we possess more of them than other days did; just as the materials for them are more numerous and more terrible. And there is also, it must thankfully be confessed, an evident capacity in the writers of our time, however sometimes it may be perverted, for perceiving good latent amidst all the evil which they have seen, and which they set forth. They acknowledge with greater clearness, I think, than men ever did before, that God is at work in this world as well as the devil, and that though the devil's works are far more obvious, there is in that which opposes them a pledge of endurance and victory, which they have not, and never can have.

No, brethren, we neither want facts, nor men to present the facts, so that we may see them and feel them. Both these possessions we have re-



ceived from God; for both we are responsible. I suppose all of us have, at some time or other, felt thankful for being roused out of a sleep or a lethargy by a clear, tremendous statement of transactions which were going on continually almost before our doors without being heeded. I suppose every one has been conscious that the shame and irritation which the discovery has caused him, though their first natural effect was to make him hate the discoverer, and try to close his eyes more firmly, were, nevertheless, indications of his previous state, and might be steps to the cure of it. We inwardly know how good it is that

‘Not all the drowsy syrups of the world  
Should medicine us again to the sweet sleep  
That we had’

before such revelations were brought home to us. But if we know thus much, we ought to know something more. We ought to know that no power lies in tales of human suffering, nor in the sight of human suffering, to make us work manfully and energetically. We must not accuse other people of being conversant with such scenes, and of receiving from them only the most transitory impression, of needing continually some fresh stimulus, which is followed by fresh exhaustion, of doing some sudden, incoherent, probably mischievous acts, to clear their consciences, and then of lapsing into indifference. All this, if we deal honestly with ourselves, we shall confess has been just as much our own case, is just as much what,

if past experience supplies any rules for judging of the future, we may expect will be the case with us again. We may try with ourselves, or with others, to keep an impression alive, or to renew it by increasing the strength of some familiar image, or by multiplying the images. We may follow Sterne’s method of fixing our minds upon the one captive, or contemplate all the thousands of captives in the different dungeons of the earth: the effect will be the same. After our faculties have been stunned with the particular instance of misery, we shall begin to think that we have wasted time upon that one, when so many others had at least equal claim upon our sympathies and our toil. Or we shall be thrown into utter confusion and despair in the attempt to grasp a multitude of evils, all demanding redress, each far too mighty for a single man, perhaps for a body of men, to grapple with. It may be a painful conclusion, but since it is a true one, we ought not to shrink from it, that if there is no other resource for humanity but to dwell intensely upon some of its sorrows, or to stretch our minds over the compass and circle of them, we shall probably end in doing nothing, and in being misanthropists.

Those, perhaps, will know best what I mean who have been in the habit of seeing people in many different diseases and stages of disease, gathered together—people distinguished from each other by their age, their occupations, their previous history; alike in this, that they subsist by their work, and that they have not power to work. To



see such persons collected from all parts of this metropolis, some of them from the furthest ends of the kingdom, some of them from other lands; to reflect on the amount of suffering which each has to bear, on the whole mass which is made up of so many particular additions; to think what a past has been preparing the way for the present in each case, and what a future may be coming out of that present and that past; this is very overwhelming. And yet the charge, which the person who has been conversant with such scenes is most inclined to bring against himself, is that they did *not* overwhelm him, that he could look at them with dull, indifferent eyes, could grow callous to them, almost unconscious of their existence. The medical practitioner has a definite task to perform. If he deals fairly and considerately with the cases as they lie before him, no one can complain of him for not tracing them to their origin, or following them to their remote consequences; though oftentimes he is led by professional honesty and zeal, as well as by general humanity, to undertake both these duties, and to perform them well. But he who ministers to the more inward wants of sick men knows that he cannot rightly understand one symptom which is now afflicting any patient with whom he converses, unless he connects it with a long train of previous symptoms, unless he can tell something at least of the influences from without, much of the poisons within, which have been working together for months, for years, for nearly a whole life. He knows this, and, in a kind of

despair of ever arriving at any satisfactory result, in a single instance, much more in such a multitude of instances, he is apt to sink into a dull mechanical habit of mind; almost to forget that he has to do with living men; to regard sickness and death as statists and registrars regard them. It seems an incredible state for a man to get into who has taken any measure of the awfulness of human life in himself or in others. And yet God only knows how easy it is, how quickly this kind of death may steal over the soul of a man who is engaged in the holiest services, and does not mean to be insincere in them. And then, when through any sudden or gradual outbreak of light upon his mind, he makes an effort and acts with a livelier recollection of what he is doing, and what the beings are with whom he has to do, there comes a staggering, sickening consciousness not only of past neglect, but of the hopelessness of the toil in which he is engaged. It seems like a presumption, like an insult, to be taking upon himself the task of speaking to these dying creatures, of whom he knows so little, words of reproof, or warning, or comfort. How dares he reprove them? What temptations have they passed through which he has never known, or which have approached him just near enough to make him know that, if they had come in greater strength, he might have fallen abjectly! How can he tell the bitter disappointments, the long fasts, the craving for fellowship, the hopeless search for work, the gnawing of inward disease, through



which a man has been betrayed into the habits of drunkenness, that have occasioned some fearful accident, or some long and fatal illness? How does he know in what way the first seeds of evil were sown, how they were ripened, how long they were counteracted, what fearful arguments which seemed to prove evil good, and good evil, may have brought them at once to maturity, in the hearts of that number of beings, once fair and free, whom he sees suffering the wages of sin, and who have acquired in the course of it habits of falsehood which make him afraid to trust their own tales of the steps that led to their fall? To speak of the past seems hard and cruel when they have suffered, and are suffering more from it than he has ever suffered for what seem to him worse offences against clearer light. And yet, without dwelling on the past, how can he shew them the way of deliverance from it? What good does there seem in doing so, what chance that they will understand him, what hope that he shall touch the one chord which might, perhaps, answer to the touch? What fear lest he should speak lying words of peace, comforting those who are seeking to deceive him, and themselves, and God! What terror lest he should bruise the bent reed, or quench the smoking flax! making those sad whom God has not made sad! Would it not be more right, more wise, more safe, to be silent altogether?

Such thoughts, I should imagine, must have presented themselves to many a minister of God's

word, who has either visited sick beds in some general receptacle for them, or has gone from one to another in the hovels where sick and healthy, young and old, males and females, are crowded together. That the conclusion is not a right one, that it comes from an evil source, and is really distrust or cowardice putting on the shape of humility and reverence, every one is doubtless aware who has not yielded long and habitually to sloth and self-indulgence. But how to answer the tempter, how to work on, and not to work in dreary, heartless routine, how to be stewards of God's mysteries, and to be at the same time fellow-sufferers with all to whom we dispense them, this is the question. We know that the two conditions have been reconciled, nay, that no man has ever fulfilled the one, who has not also, in a measure, fulfilled the other; that no man has truly declared the Gospel of Christ who has not borne the burdens of his brethren, and so fulfilled the law of Christ. But how they learnt this secret, what gave them the power of carrying such weights and not sinking under them, is a point which we shall have to settle again and again in practice, after we have solved it ever so satisfactorily in theory. That is a truth which I would never wish to forget myself, or wish you to forget, while I venture to declare what I believe has been the great stay and consolation of hundreds and thousands who have stood by sick beds, when every other has seemed to forsake them.

It is not a new or strange consolation of



which I speak. It is that on which I have been dwelling in all these sermons, the only one which has made the Baptism of Infants, or the Baptism of Adults, or Education, or Confirmation, or Marriage, intelligible to us; the belief, I mean, that God is verily and in deed the Father of a great family in Christ, of which we know not the past, or the present, or the future limits; but of which we do know this, that One who took the nature of man, and died for all mankind, is the head of it, and that to bring men into it was the end for which He came down from heaven, and suffered, and rose again, and ascended on high, and sent down His Spirit. Understanding that this family is the ground of human society, that a society is incomprehensible and disorderly which does not confess God for the Father of all its members, Christ for their elder brother, the Spirit for their teacher, sanctifier, comforter, we desire in all our acts and words to carry out this principle, not willingly to recognize any exceptions to it. If we must do so, at all events let us treat them as exceptions, never as instances of a rule. We dare not therefore recognize any one great human institution as merely a natural institution, or, on the other hand, as merely a secular and artificial institution. We must consider it as a gracious ordinance, of which God Himself is the author, a seal and pledge of our relation to Him as children of grace.

Hitherto the evidences of this fatherly constitution have had reference to man mainly as a

redeemed creature, though at every step we have had indications and witnesses of the fallen and accursed nature which he carries with him, out of which he has been raised, into which he is ever ready to sink. Now we have to speak of the great outward sign and manifestation of that fallen condition, of that law of death, of the great anomaly which moral evil has introduced into the physical conditions and circumstances of man's life. What would all our previous conclusions be worth if we were obliged to stop at this point, and say, 'Here the great law of the universe breaks down; here order has been found to be too weak for the elements of disorder which are opposing it; here the gates of hell *have* prevailed against the Church of Christ?' No, it is just here that we are bound to plant our foot, and say, 'This sickness, this disease, this death, is the testimony that the gates of hell *have not* prevailed.' Looking steadily and sternly at each particular phase of disease, shrinking from none of its most ghastly features, tracing it to its causes, following it to its consequences, reflecting on all the complications of disease to which flesh is heir, on all the accursed derangements in the hearts of individual men, and in our social economy which have produced them, we say boldly, 'Behold the great signs and trophies of redemption!' In the midst of this confusion and wretchedness we proclaim these words, 'If ye endure chastisement, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? But if



ye are without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.'

The language sounds free, and large, and comfortable; but what right have we to adopt it and apply it to such a population as ours? It was addressed originally to the Hebrew Christians. Now, those Christians were, undoubtedly, if we may believe the writer of the Epistle, in anything but an elevated spiritual condition. He warns them continually, and in the most awful terms, that they were in danger of apostasy. He bids them remember that the ground which has undergone much tillage, and which brings forth only weeds and briers, is nigh unto cursing. Still there is such a notion in our minds of something peculiar and sacred in the condition of the Church in the Apostolic days; there is such an unwillingness to believe the testimony of the Apostles themselves concerning it, that I know it will be said, 'Oh! but these expressions respecting chastisement were addressed to holy men—to believers—though possibly some of them were in a state of temporary declension. How then can they, without the greatest outrage upon their sense, be brought to bear upon the half heathens—the more than half heathens—of which our cities are full?' Against such a prepossession as this it is vain to oppose mere isolated arguments. There is one which I trust will not be quite without its weight. If we take the words of the Gospels, simply and literally, all the acts of our Lord on earth were ways of proclaiming the king-

dom of heaven to men. His miracles of healing were so in an especial manner. 'If I by the finger of God cast out devils, surely the kingdom of God is come nigh to you.' This was His universal language. That same kingdom of heaven—the kingdom of a Father—which He proclaimed upon the Mount, when He opened His mouth, and said, 'Blessed are they that mourn'—that same kingdom was preached in another way—by another demonstration—when He healed the leper, when He said to the sick of the palsy, 'Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.' Now for whom were these acts of mercy performed which were to carry this message—this gospel—home to men's hearts? The Evangelists take pains to inform us; we can only avoid their testimony by resolute carelessness and disbelief. The lost sheep of the house of Israel were the main objects of these acts of love—especially, emphatically, the *lost* sheep—the publicans and the harlots, those whom all the decent and devout part of the Jewish community were turning from in disgust and horror. Yet not these only. Our Lord had come as a light to lighten the Gentiles; and though the Gospel of peace and reconciliation could not go forth to them generally till He had been lifted up, yet foretastes of the blessing were to reach them during the days of His humiliation—and these foretastes were especially to reach the sick. The Church which to-day speaks of the manifestation of Him who was a true King of the Jews, to the Magi in the cradle at Bethlehem, on the Sun-



day after Epiphany selects these acts of healing as manifestations of Christ's divine glory, such especially as the cure of the Centurion's servant, which was performed for one without the Covenant. It is not the miracles for their own sake that I dwell upon ; I speak of them because our Lord so expressly and so continually forces us to notice the purport, the signification of them. When he had healed the man at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath-day, His answer to the complaint of the Pharisees was, ' My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.' This healing act was a manifestation of His Father's mind and will ; in this act, as in every other that the Son did, they that saw Him, saw the Father. That they might see the Father, might feel and own Him as a Father, He wrought His divine cures, He spoke His divine words. Consider the parable of the shepherd seeking the strayed sheep of the flock ; of the woman sweeping the house for the piece of money she had lost ; of the father going out to meet the prodigal who had begun to dream of the house from which he had wandered. Consider these in relation to the circumstances under which they were spoken, and then say whether it is possible to doubt that our Lord, by His acts of mercy, was proving that He had come to seek His sheep ; that the sickness and sorrows which had brought them to His feet, crying for help, were His way of sweeping the house in search of the treasure He had lost ; that all these works of power were so many indications

of the mind of God towards the whole race and towards each outcast of the race for which He came to die. Hence the human sympathies of our Lord come out not as separate from His divine and universal love, but as the inevitable effluence of it. ' So were the words fulfilled,' says St. Matthew, speaking of a time when He healed great multitudes, ' Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.' Each cure implied an inward fellowship and participation in the misery which it relieved. The feeling for the multitude, who were as sheep without a shepherd, did not interfere with, but involved an intense community with individual anguish. Now if these records of His life belong to a period before the Sacrifice had been offered for the whole world, before the Gospel had been preached to all kindreds and nations, surely it is an accursed doctrine—a doctrine of devils—which, after this Gospel has gone forth, after the covenant of baptism has been established for 1800 years, and has been claimed for more than 1000 years for the people of our land—would hide from our publicans and harlots the words, ' God dealeth with you as with children.' Strange as all your history must seem to you ; strange as all the dark and horrible evils into which you have been led ; strange as all the different human instincts and outward circumstances which have tended to your perdition ; strange as the punishments you are now suffering, and the anguish which the thought of the past often brings with it ; strange as are all the more



fearful presentiments of the future; yet believe, and be sure, that this is true, whatever else is false. You have a Father, a Father who so loved the world, and so loved you, as to give His only-begotten Son for it and for you; a Father who will not let one of these untoward circumstances, these evil human influences, hold you down, if you will cast yourselves upon Him; a Father who has a power mightier than all the powers within and without that are keeping you in chains; a Father who will use the anguish of the present, and the recollections of the past, and the terrors of the future, as so many instruments for your deliverance and blessing; a Father who can turn even the oppression of your fellow-creatures, and the neglect of His own servants, into blessings, by making them reasons for a more entire, absolute, childlike dependence upon Himself.

Brethren, I do not want to be told how much appearances contradict this faith. Those who make appearances the law of their lives, who judge by what they see, must cast it aside. I will not, cannot, ask them, on any principle which they confess, to adopt it or retain it. I will only ask them to try and look the world's facts in the face without it; and if they find it impossible, if they must suppress disagreeable evidences, and deal dishonestly with themselves, or become mad—then to consider whether the belief of their forefathers in moral and spiritual truths may not have had some deeper ground than appearances to rest upon, just as they know well that the physical

order of the universe has. Those who do believe, under whatever modifications, that the Gospel is a message from heaven, I would simply ask, what a gospel from heaven can be, if it is not a gospel concerning a Father; if it is not a declaration how that Father looks upon His children, and what He has done to reconcile them to Himself? We must fall back upon this alternative: 'Is the death of Christ the highest and most conclusive demonstration which we possess concerning the mind and character of God, and the relation in which He stands to men, or is there some higher?' If there is no higher, then, in despite of all outward appearances, and of all theoretical difficulties, we must take up that language which our service for the Visitation of the Sick uses, and which it warrants all the ministers of the Church in using. I will use no stronger expression than this. I do not care to say the Church *enjoins* this language on us. I readily admit that she authorizes us to depart from the mere letter of the exhortation when our judgment, enlightened, as we hope, by the Spirit, leads us to think such a deviation desirable. But the principle which is embodied in that exhortation—the principle I mean of addressing every sick person as under God's fatherly correction—the principle of applying my text directly to each—as the assertion of a fact in which they are concerned—this I am justified in saying is the principle of the Church. There are those, I am sure, who can say what it has been to them in hours of unspeakable de-



spondency, to know that they might act upon that rule when they were dealing with their own consciences, and with the consciences of those to whom they were ministering. They can tell how the burden of remorse has been rolled from them; how they have been able to exchange it for a healthy and humble repentance, when they felt that it was a Father against whom they had sinned in being careless of His children, and when they believed that the same Father who blotted out their transgressions, and accepted them in His Son, looked down with an eye of love upon the most fallen and abject of their brothers and sisters, and was seeking by severe chastisements to make them partakers of His holiness. And whether they understand His purpose or not, whether they arise, and go to Him or not, the fact is the same; God is true, though every man is a liar. It is a despicable cowardice which shrinks from proclaiming His character and love at all times, in all places, to all persons, because many of those to whom we speak may harden themselves against it. If we know ourselves, we cannot wonder at such hardness, or be ignorant of the cause of it, or be driven to despair by it. But if we know ourselves, we shall know also how only that ice is thawed, how only human hearts are delivered from the thraldom of the evil spirit. We may speak of Duties, and the will groans under its incapacity, then returns to its slumbers. We may speak of Doctrines, and the intellect, dulled by bodily pain, confused by vague teaching,

or never awakened at all, may give our propositions any meaning or none. Worse still, the man may persuade himself that the duties have been performed, that the doctrines have been comprehended, while he remains a heartless hypocrite. It is another thing surely when we assure him that he is the member of a family; that a Father is gracious to His children; that His Son, who gave Himself for them, is near them, and inviting them to trust Him; that His Spirit is near to quicken and restore that which has been decayed through the fraud and malice of the devil, or their own carnal will and frailness. It is another thing when acts of confession, prayer, absolution, are presented to the sick man, not as parts of an ecclesiastical system, but as means of returning to the house of a parent who meets him when he is a great way off, falls upon his neck, and kisses him, puts the best robe upon him, prepares a feast for him, makes chastisement, which seemed the sign of hopeless displeasure, the pledge and seal of his adoption.



## SERMON VIII.

## BURIAL SERVICE.

Preached in Lincoln's Inn, 1st Sunday after Epiphany,  
January 13, 1850.

## 1 THESS. IV. 13, 14.

*But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.*

THE little child, in a well-known poem, persisted that there were seven in her family, though two were sleeping under the tree in the churchyard. The poet asks, ‘What should such a child know of death?’ Nothing, perhaps, and yet her language may have been true, and her faith deeper than that of many of her elders. ‘If we are converted, and become as little children,’ we too may learn to speak as she spoke, to think as she thought.

One cannot but feel that we have departed very widely from the tone and spirit of Scripture upon this subject. It is not surely that our conception of death is more awful than that which we find in the Holy Writings. Death is there

presented in its most fearful character, as the wages of sin, as opposed to the life of which Christ is the author. The notion of death as something graceful, sentimental, beautiful, is not to be discovered there. All theatrical conceptions about fine exits from the world, are utterly foreign from its simplicity and truthfulness. But, on the other hand, it would seem as if there were not the same emphasis and prominence given to the moment of departure which it has obtained in our modern theology. A man is not taught in Scripture so much to be thinking of that moment and preparing for it, as to be thinking of the coming of our Lord and preparing for Him. Supposing the two forms of language were merely used to denote the same idea, yet the difference of expression would surely be evidence of a different habit of mind. No one however believes that the phrases, ‘hour of death,’ and ‘coming of the Lord,’ are equivalent, or could be exchanged for one another. The substitution of the first phrase for the second in our writings and exhortations, must shew that we have not adhered to the standard which we profess to regard as inspired and perfect. If we look for the reason, we shall, perhaps, find this at least to be the chief, that our minds are much more individualising and less social than those of the apostles and confessors of the first age. To them the Church was indeed a brotherhood. Christ had delivered them from their selfish, separate existence; He had brought them into union with His body. Sympathy with that body was



their great privilege; to be separate from it was their great curse. They could not, therefore, speak of any blessing or privilege as belonging to any one of them, which did not belong to all. They could not understand the blessings which appertain to all, and therefore to each, except as they connected them with His acts, His sufferings, His triumphs, in whom they had been created originally, and who had taken their nature, that He might claim them as His own. When they thought of death it was as of a mighty power which had intruded itself into God's blessed order, and had broken up the fellowship for which He had formed His creatures. It was the great divider, that which took each person and thing apart, cutting the link between that and every other person and thing. Christ they affirmed to be the asserter and restorer of God's blessed order. He had overcome every power which prevented men from forming one family. He had overcome *death*. All His other victories might, therefore, be gathered up in that one expression. He had passed into the awful solitude of death. He had felt its solitude as none ever felt it. His soul had been poured out to death. All had been darkness beneath, around, above. But the light had proved stronger than the darkness. The great Reconciler was shewn to be mightier than the great divider. In death He slew death. 'He rose from the dead,' St. Peter says, 'because it was not possible that He should be holden of it.' The Apostles did not look upon His resurrection

as a strange episode in His history, as something altogether peculiar and unexpected. To believe that He was the Son of God, the mediator between God and man, in whom all things were formed, and in whom all things consisted, and to suppose that He did not rise, would have been in their minds an utter, incredible contradiction. Their great and natural difficulty had been to conceive how one, whom they acknowledged as the Deliverer of Israel, though they had only a dim apprehension of Him in any higher character, could die at all. Does not Christ, they asked, abide for ever? They had not yet learned the more wonderful and profound truth, that the Deliverer must die, because those died whom He came to deliver; that the greatest proof of Christ abiding for ever, was that He could die. When once they had perceived this truth, they could not but apply it to themselves. His death and resurrection became connected, not with their departure out of this world, or what was to follow that departure, but with their entrance into it; not with a future state of existence only, but with the whole of their existence here. They put on Christ's death at baptism; they were buried with Him. But baptism was not less intimately connected with the resurrection. It was the pledge of their union to a living Lord, over whom death had no power; in whom dwelt the spirit of life which came forth from Him upon all who trusted in Him. By that baptism their Father sealed them as children; by it they took up their places in the Universal



Family. How could they maintain their position? By continually remembering that, as individuals, they are merely dead creatures, carrying upon them the sentence and curse of Adam, surrounded by a whole world of creatures dragging on an existence under the same sentence and curse, but that, as members of Christ, they were risen and living creatures, carrying in them the blessing of a perpetually-renewed life, citizens of a holy city, sharers of a goodly and glorious inheritance with those that were about them, and with those that had gone before; fellow-workers with them, fellow-workers with God. To resist those individual tendencies, that law of death which they had renounced at their baptism, to maintain their rights as members of the household of Saints, was therefore the good fight of faith which they had to carry on every day and hour. A hard fight it would be. Selfishness without, selfishness within, would be continually assailing them. They would see others thinking that they were to live to themselves and die to themselves; the suggestion that they were sent into the world for that end would be continually rising within them; would be continually leading them to acts utterly inconsistent with their relations as brethren. They could only overcome these arguments by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of His testimony, by remembering that His whole life had been a battle and a sacrifice, that He had given up Himself to God and for man, and had been raised again from the dead by the glory of the Father,

and had given them the power and privilege of walking in newness of life.

So all along it was not the expectation of some selfish advantage and possession for themselves which they were cherishing, and which they tried to keep alive by recurring to the promises of God and the facts of Redemption. Those promises and those facts taught them to cast away all selfish desires and expectations; to fix their minds not on their own deaths, but on Christ's death; not on their own resurrection, but on Christ's resurrection. They turned to Him as the centre of all their hopes, the source of their life; in whom they had eternal life. They believed that He had triumphed, and would triumph; that He had declared God's name, and would declare it; that He had established His kingdom, and would establish it till every other was subjugated to it; that He had done God's Will on earth as it is done in heaven, and that He would cause it to be done on earth as it is in heaven. This was their high reward; they asked no other. And therefore His coming, the manifestation of His glory, the complete fulfilment of His purposes, was that to which their eyes were turned continually. The world was oppressed; He was its Deliverer. The world was anarchical; He was its King. The world was divided; He was the Reconciler. In that faith they could live; and in that faith they could die. Death itself was no welcome guest. He was an invader, an enemy; he came to sever the dearest



and most sacred bonds. But then it had been shewn that he could not sever them. The Family could not be destroyed; it stood in Him who had come forth from the Father to make them sons of God in Him. It stood in Him who had walked on the earth, and ascended to heaven. He had died that He might make all at one. His death was the sacrament of their fellowship with God and with each other. Nor only with those whom they had seen and walked with, nor only with those who, in different parts of the earth, confessed openly or secretly the same unseen Lord. The sacrament of His death must extend much further than this. They felt and knew that they had affinities and obligations to those who had left the world ages before Christ's death explained and ratified these affinities and obligations. They believed in Him as the Lord of all generations past, as well as of the generation present, and the generations to come. His death made their death no longer a dark riddle. It was not a sign of separation from Him, therefore it was not a sign of separation from any of their brethren. The love of His Sacrifice overshadowed all Creation. His Resurrection was a witness that He, and not Death, was the Ruler over the race of human beings, and over all that belonged to that race.

'Therefore,' says the Apostle to the young converts in Thessalonica, who firmly believed in Christ as the deliverer, but who were disposed to limit Him by notions of space and time, and

who trembled for the state of men that had died before He came in the flesh;—'Therefore sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.' It is not a consolation, you observe, respecting themselves. It refers to their departed friends and ancestors. For them they were not to sorrow as others who had no hope. Christ's death and resurrection were to be a strength and confidence, not for themselves only, but for those who knew what a battle He would fight, what a victory He would win. This battle and victory passed all the conceptions and knowledge which converts or Apostles could form about them. To believe in them, to rejoice in them, to give thanks for them, was always safe. For only in these acts the spirit would catch glimpses of something far beyond its own powers and measures. To try and bring God within our dim anticipations—most of all, to try and make His transcendent acts merely the warrants for our selfish dreams—is always most perilous. The dreams being selfish will be certainly poor, unreal, ungodly; they will last for the night, and disappear when the morning breaks.

The Apostle, therefore, when he would present that view of Christ's Revelation and Appearing which most cheered and sustained his own mind, speaks of it as 'a gathering together in Him.' He supposes us here to be quite incapable of discerning the extent of His great family. He



knows that we understand most imperfectly the bonds which unite us even to the members of it, with whom we are in the closest visible intercourse. That we should feel more inwardly the relations in which we stand to each other ; that we should fulfil them as we never have fulfilled them yet ; that we should know our fellow-beings as we have never known them yet ;—this he anticipates as the great and necessary consequence of a fuller discovery of Him in whom all live, and move, and have their being. The Apocalypse, I need scarcely remind you, expands this idea of St. Paul, and raises it to a higher power. First, the Son of man is seen walking in the midst of seven golden candlesticks, with the stars in His right hand—the bond of union, the Source of Light to the earth. Then a door in heaven is opened ; there is the vision of one sitting on a throne, of the spirits before it, and of the Lamb that was slain. And then appears a multitude which no man could number, out of every kindred, and people, and tongue. The Lamb is the common centre of attraction to those below and those above. He is the Prince of all the kings of the earth, who has made us kings and priests unto God and our Father. He it is to whom all angels and principalities give glory. Here, then, we have the faith of the little child. It is really the faith of apostles and martyrs, and of the spirits about the throne. Death has not destroyed the relation between the brothers and sisters of a family. The two that are under the churchyard-

tree are still members of the circle. They have not gone into some strange region where the fancy may dwell, but with which the heart and reason can hold no converse. We know where they are. Christ sealed them as His. The world did not create the relationship between us. It tried hard to divide us from each other. Christ was the bond of our union ; in Him it is maintained. Those who closed their eyes on the things which ours look upon fell asleep in Him—a sleep which may be yet a true waking, which may be compatible with ministries more active than any which we perform, ministries unincumbered by sloth and selfishness. And surely it is in fulfilling the tasks with which we are entrusted, in fighting hard with the enemies that assault us, in holding fast to the faith that Christ died, and rose again, that we understand what their works must be, and enter into them, and become assured that, though sin may tear families apart, death cannot.

I have dwelt too long on what I believe is the Scriptural and Divine way of contemplating this subject, to have much time for pointing out the painful contrast which I said existed between that and the way which has become habitual to us. I need not enlarge upon it ; we all know it, and how naturally we slide into it.

*'Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers.'* The question, 'How much can I get by this mode of dealing, or that ?' has become the one question in our minds when we think and speak of earthly things. We cannot change all our tone and habits



when we speak and think of heavenly things. If Sunday does not give a character to the six days, it will infallibly receive its character from them. If trade is not raised and purified by our faith, trade will degrade and destroy our faith. It has worked fearfully in that way. How shall I get the blessings of a future state? is the thought which presents itself to a man when, for a few minutes, he stops in the career of business, or when he is roused by some sudden calamity, to recollect death, and what may follow death. Unhappily both Romanist and Protestant teachers are too ready to fall in with this kind of speculation, and even to reckon it a great instance of religious skill if they can excite it. For how, they argue, are we to make selfish people seek for heaven, except we appeal to their selfishness? They forget that to care for the *word* heaven, for a certain loose, corrupt notion, which we attach to that word, is not to care for heaven. They forget that the notions which they are encouraging must lead persons, except at certain peculiar crises or instants of their lives, to dwell upon the most vulgar, sordid, palpable objects. They forget how continually they are themselves complaining that they cannot by the most stringent representations of the perils of indifference to invisible things, withhold any number of men for any length of time from those which are present and passing. They forget still more utterly and fatally that all the men to whom they are speaking have other feelings stirring in them besides these

calculating and selfish ones; that they might appeal to the better instead of the worse; that they might use the better for the extirpation of the worse; that, in so doing, they would be able to employ the arguments, and press the exhortations, and fall in with the spirit of Scripture, instead of presenting the phrases of Scripture attached to a set of notions which are the most alien from it. Every man naturally thinks of Death as that which disturbs the family circle; as that which severs friend from friend. If we meet men as men, this is the aspect under which we consider it. We are expected, professionally, to look at it under another aspect. But I apprehend this is the most human, as well as the most divine. If any man consistently contemplated it I am sure he would come, much more directly than by any other way, to a craving for some deliverer from death—to a belief that the deliverer must be one in whom dwells the sympathy of God, one who has known the sufferings of men; to a feeling of the nature and destructive power of sin in himself, and in the race; so, through living practical experience, to all the deepest mysteries, as exhibited in the historical facts, of the Gospel.

Brethren, if we have failed to keep alive this temper of mind in you, and connect it with thoughts of the grave, I believe God has made compensation to you for our defects, and has given you a guide into a better course. I do not think any one has ever laid a friend in the earth without feeling that the very first words of our service



carried him beyond the ordinary and customary topics of consolation into quite another region : 'I am the Resurrection and the Life.' With what a mighty power have these sounds sometimes struck upon the heart which had been fixed in the most confirmed dullness and hardness ! What a witness they seem to bear of a quickening energy near us, and near the whole creation, which can speak to those who are dead in trespasses and sins, as well as to those who are in their graves ! And these words are the key-note to the whole service ; when the inward ear has listened to them, the rest of it comes to us with the most living evidence of its truth and seasonableness. No service of our Church, you all know, has provoked so many censures ; none has cheered so many broken and contrite hearts—broken and contrite for others, as well as themselves. Do you wonder that we find fault with it when every passage of it affronts that individualising temper which has become so characteristic of us all ? Do you wonder that, for that very reason, it should cheer the weary and heavy-laden, because it assumes us to be real members of a brotherhood, and that he whose dust we are about to give to dust is a member of it too ? Throughout we claim that title for him, as well as ourselves. Throughout we speak as if we believed that Christ died for him, and for us, and for the universe. The expression of that belief has caused the great scandal of our service. For though the *sure* and *certain* hope of the Resurrection to Eternal Life stands in direct and

formal contrast to the *hope* that our brother sleeps in Christ, though every real mourner feels keenly the difference of the expressions, and yet feels the deep comfort of both, the *critic* cannot perceive any important practical distinction. For what, he says, signifies a belief in THE Resurrection, except as it involves a belief in the safety of some individual man ? We could not ask a more startling test of the state of mind into which we have fallen than such a question furnishes. Everything is reduced into a calculation about safety. The belief in a great Redemption effected for humanity is nothing ! There is no help or satisfaction in that ! So says the verbal commentator. But those who really need help feel that it is all there. They know the distress and torture of balancing signs of encouragement against arguments of fear,—distress and torture, not in the saddest and most doubtful cases only, but even when the life has been self-denying and God-like. They know little of inward anguish who do not know how the evil spirit can suggest these doubts, to a harassed, self-accusing conscience. But oh ! the infinite comfort of turning from all reasonings to the absolute and eternal Love of Him who gave His Son for us all. On this love the Church invites us to dwell—confiding in it to commit our brother to Him who took him into His family. We shrink from that act of faith. 'Oh no !' we say ; 'we cannot thank God for taking him ; if we had kept him we might have made him so much fitter for his change.' Vain and self-glori-



fying notion! Idle dream! The real mourner cherishes it but for a moment. He recollects his own manifold failures; his unfaithful exhibition of God's love to the brother that is gone; his coldness; his positive transgressions. He cries, 'To thy hands I give him up, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thou hast seen fit to take him from us who so often led him wrong; I know Thou wilt do right. I trust myself to Thee, I dare not refuse, blindly, implicitly to trust him.'

I have not put forth any apology for this Service on the common plea that it presumes an ecclesiastical discipline which does not now exist amongst us. It may presume such discipline; perhaps it does, though I know not when we possessed it. But I trust that God in His mercy will not give us the power of excommunicating till He has taught us how to use it. If we had it now in practical exercise, we should make excommunication the rule, and communion the exception. We should erect ourselves into judges, taking away the right and power from Him who is the Judge of the whole earth. And then Christ's fearful sentence would be fulfilled to us: 'With what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again.' Let us learn to believe that Jesus died and rose again; and that He who is the Deliverer is the Judge. Let us wait for His righteous and true judgment, for the full revelation of that light which will shew all persons and

things as they truly are. So will our judgments of ourselves be more severe, and our hope for our fellow-men brighter; so shall we hate the sin in them, and in ourselves, because we shall love them as ourselves.

There is a short service in the Prayer Book, of which I shall not speak particularly; because I should be obliged to repeat what I have already said in the Sermons on Infant Baptism and on Marriage. But let us not forget that the Office for the Churching of Women follows that of the Burial of the Dead; that life comes out of death; that the continuance of the race as well as the history of each individual, is a witness that we are living under a Law of Restoration, Resurrection, Regeneration.



## SERMON IX.

## THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.—ORDINATION.

Preached in Lincoln's Inn, 2nd Sunday after Epiphany,  
January 20, 1850.

## I. CORINTHIANS IV. 1.

*Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.*

THESE words commence the Epistle for the Third Sunday in Advent. St. Paul applied them to himself and Apollos, and to all other preachers of the Gospel in his day. Those who arranged our Services saw nothing in the words or in the context which limited them to the Apostle's time. They seemed just as applicable to the fourth century or to the sixteenth as to the first. The Apostle addressed them to the Corinthians who regarded Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas, as teachers of schools, heads of sects. Our Prayer Book addresses them to our English people, supposing that they are likely to make that mistake respecting their preachers, or a greater one.

1. The Corinthian mistake has been repeated in all ages. This Christian doctor has been the chief and representative of one religious faction, that of another. Sometimes he is reluctantly enthroned in that position, his own earnest wish

being to maintain what he believes to be a truer and a nobler one. Most commonly he begins with announcing some truth which he has been taught from above, and which has taken mighty possession of him. It is opposed and ridiculed. A few warm-hearted disciples feel how precious it is, and are ready to live and die for it. They cannot separate, they are not meant to separate, the truth from him who advocates it. It is not a dry abstract formula, it is living and personal. It naturally attaches itself to all personal sympathies. It connects itself also with personal antipathies; how hard not to feel indignation with those who hate the thing or the man we love! It is hard for the object of our love not to foster the dislike in us, when he is most striving to oppose it, in us and in himself. Speedily lower feelings become strong in both. Men who are capable of these lower feelings much more than of the higher ones, and are not watchful against them, gather round the standard, adopt the watchwords, substitute flatteries for affection, bitterness for indignation. The change is scarcely marked, it works so gradually. The favourite who is especially the victim of it, is inwardly conscious of the difference; but how is he to express it without disconcerting kind allies, weakening their fervency, strengthening the hands of his opponents? That soon becomes the great fear of all. Whatever else happens, no triumph must be given to them. To do it, comes soon to be called *sacrificing the interests of truth, temporiz-*



*ing, compromising, half-heartedness.* The thought sometimes dawns upon the conscience, that truth may be sacrificed in another way, that dishonest acts may be palliated, statements full of paradox, exaggeration, distortion of other men's meanings sanctioned, phrases allowed to do duty for the realities they represent. All such doubts are hushed; the cause is gaining ground; we must be thankful for its advance; we must push it on further, honestly if we can. Alas! *what cause?* Not the one with which we began, not the one that enlisted those warm hearts in its favour, not the one which provoked the first indignation of men who were settling on their lees, and hated to be disturbed. The cause has become that of enmity or hostility to some rival opinion. '*The youthful hose well saved*' has become a vesture for shrivelled, withered limbs. The friends or brothers have become a club or faction whose internal strifes are scarcely kept out of sight by their dislike to every club and faction but their own. He who once led them to higher efforts of faith, to deeper discoveries of truth, has become only a name in which they must symbolize, their conscious servant and tool, to be praised before others, to be scorned among themselves, soon to transmit his feeble sceptre to more unscrupulous and unprincipled hands.

2. And yet, brethren, there is a worse tendency than that one to which the Corinthians yielded, and in which they have been imitated by Christians of all countries and ages.

Those who account of their teachers as heads of a school or party, at least retain some interest, however unhealthy a one, in the subjects of which their teachers speak. It is possible to regard those whom St. Paul calls, '*Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the mysteries of God*', merely as members of a certain profession adopted from childhood upwards, upon a calculation that it will bring in more material advantages than any other; a profession which is necessary or at least desirable, for the economy of a well-regulated society; a profession the main end of which is to keep rich men decorous and poor men civil; a profession whose members have a certain set of cab-bala among themselves, which concern none but themselves, and a certain set of general, popular phrases, which it is very proper that all should listen to on Sundays, and which have as little as possible connexion with any of their doings in the week; a profession which bears the most solemn titles, and is only considered safe when its acts interfere with no reigning evil, and leave all the contradictions of the world just as they find them. This is a more degrading, petrifying view of an office, our thoughts of which must determine, whether we mean it or not, our thoughts about every other work in which men are engaged. And yet what English layman will say that it is not a view which he has found more or less pervading the circle in which he has lived? What English clergyman will say that it is not one



which has affected and debased his own moral being?

3. There is an escape from both these ways of considering the Christian teacher, which many in our time have adopted. We may look upon him as a person wholly unlike other men, separated from them by his first designation, bound to preserve that separation in all his conduct, by his outward appearance, by the adoption of a tone altogether unlike that of those whom he calls earthly or secular. Clergymen taking up a position of this kind had great power in former days—may have great power in our own. Over some portions of the community it is certain that they will. He who stands upon the dignity of his office will extort a homage from many who would refuse it to one claiming it for his own personal endowments, or as the supporter of a certain set of opinions. He who does not mix himself up with the business and policy of the world will often be thought to be above it; sometimes will exercise a great influence over it. But who that knows what the world has suffered from assumptions of this kind, can wonder that men generally should think any habit of feeling safer than that which sanctions and encourages them? And who that feels the perils of pharisaic consequence in the eyes of others, and of self-glorification in his own, who that knows what tricks have been resorted to for the sake of keeping up a shew of dignity, an air of supremacy among vulgar men,

or, still worse, a mock humility, would not pray that God would make him the meanest hewer of wood, or drawer of water, rather than a priest who was obliged to prove that he was more than an ordinary human being, by parting with all the better and truer qualities which belong to one?

4. ‘Let a man so account of us,’ says St. Paul, ‘as ministers of Christ.’ The thought especially present to his mind, the one which he develops in all the early chapters of the Epistle to the Corinthians—I might say through the whole of it—is that he is a Minister of Christ, and therefore not the Minister of a sect. Either the Apostles came to preach one who was the Head of many members, the bond of peace and reconciliation, or they did not. If they did not, they were not preachers of Christ at all; their baptism meant nothing; their Church meant nothing. If they did, how dared they act as if they were preachers of themselves, or some notion of their own? How dared they act as if people were baptized into their name, as if the Church consisted of their followers?

This was his great principle. But since the general tendency to schism among the Corinthians was strengthened by a particular tendency to the worship of intellect—to the glorification of men for their gifts—it was necessary to shew how this principle bore upon that habit. ‘You exalt Paul for his mighty letters, Apollos for his eloquent discourses; but Christ shewed forth the power of God in weakness; the Cross was the great manifestation of the divine glory. If we



are ministers of Christ it must be our business to manifest God's glory as He manifested it, to exhibit the eternal love, and wisdom, and righteousness as they appeared in Him who took upon Him the form of a servant. Just so far, therefore, as we are inspiring you with the notion that some special talent appertaining to us as individuals is the secret of our influence, just so far are we destroying that influence, or making it an unchristian and an evil one. Just so far as you dwell upon this talent or wisdom, just so far you are not receiving that demonstration of truth to your hearts which God intended for you. There is something which intercepts every ray of light that would find its way to your inward eye; something which prevents your inward ears from listening to God's voice.' In saying, then, 'we are ministers of Christ,' St. Paul struck at the root of that inclination, which he probably had felt as strongly as any one, to exalt himself into a great leader or sophist. He struck at that same ambitious craving in every other man's mind, and at the slavery as well as the disunion which it always brings with it into human societies. And he did this by claiming for himself a much higher title than that which he renounced. 'I dare not own myself,' he said, 'to be a sect-leader, for I am the minister of Christ. The Son of God has sent me to bind together a great family in His Name; shall I rend it in pieces that I may establish a faction in my own name? He has sent me to testify that He came in poverty to poor men, that

He had no reputation among scribes and doctors; but was mocked and contradicted among them as an impostor, and at last put to death through their means as a blasphemer. Do I think so meanly of that work of His, which I profess to think the greatest ever accomplished in the world, that I should count credit with the wise and the religious, which He refused, more precious than fellowship with the weak and sinful which He chose? All sects, Pharisaic, Sadducean, Herodian, which never embraced before, fraternized in their abhorrence of Him. And why? Because they were setting up their own schemes and theories; because they would not be gathered together in one; because they could not see the glory of Him who claimed to be the Son of the Eternal Father, the King and Priest of the human family. I am a minister of Christ, I therefore cannot be the agent and tool of that Spirit which struggled with Him during all His stay upon earth, and will struggle with Him till it is finally cast out.' Here we see at once why St. Paul uses such lofty language about his vocation and Apostleship. Deprive him of that language, force him to consider himself anything less than that which he said he was, and you at once invest him as an individual with powers to which he felt that he had no right, which would destroy the very purpose of his existence, which would make his preaching a lie.

5. And yet these words, 'Ministers of Christ,' could not refer to any dignity which the Apostle had above those who should follow him. By the



hypothesis they could not. He had seen Christ the Lord ; he had gifts more than all the Apostles. But the very intent of his words is to prove that he did not stand upon privileges or gifts, however great they might be. He says he was with them in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. These were the signs of his ministry ; not his speaking with tongues, or having had visions of the third heaven. And here also was the secret of his power—he says so himself. By his weakness he says it was shewn and felt that the influence he exerted was not his own, that it was God's. He took up therefore a general title for himself, for Apollos, for Cephas, for all in every age who should venture to go forth to declare Christ's Gospel to men. If they assumed any lower name than that of Christ's ministers, if they did not claim to be actually called and sent by Him, they would be tempted just as those who preached in the first age were, to become authors of factions : just in proportion as they really held to that name, and attached to it its full force and significance, would they be preserved from that peril.

6. And not for that only, but for those others to which I referred, as leading to even worse results. How is it possible for any man living in a society in which that notion of the Christian ministry as a more respectable trade, or as a good provision for the younger sons of illustrious houses, as a means by which some of the lower classes may hope to rise and to obtain a better position than

their fathers held—how, I ask, in a society where these, and worse notions than these, are current, where they give a colour and shape to our ordinary language, and to our best-considered acts, where they mingle unconsciously with the thoughts and habits of even the purest and noblest minds, is a man who holds the Bible in his hand, and declares that he reckons it as the rule of his life, and tells other men that it is the rule of their lives, to keep himself from a tone which he sees is as inconsistent with the spirit of the Bible as the breach of any one of the Ten Commandments would be? Only, I believe, by falling back upon these words—by saying continually to himself, ‘I am the minister of Christ. All the accidents and circumstances of my position are nothing to that one great primary characteristic of it. They may perish in a year or a day. What security have I that that which belongs to the external condition of things will not undergo those changes to which all external conditions are liable? If we have not used our advantages faithfully, if we have boasted of them, if we have become the victims of them, why may not God, for our good, and in His mercy, shatter them to pieces? While they last we are not to cast them away, but to desire that they may be turned to good ; but who knows whether they have not a sentence of death already written on them, as I surely have one on me? But this name, ‘Minister of Christ,’ belongs to the eternal order of things. That does not depend upon the per-



manence of any circumstances, or upon our continuance in them. It is one of those fixed relations into which a man is brought, and which he cannot shake off. If Christ has sent me to do a work in the world, He will ask whether it has been done, not whether those for whom I was to do it thought well or ill of me. They certainly did not think well of Him for whom He came to die. Such thoughts as these, brethren, are, I conceive, very needful for a clergyman who is at all exposed to the attrition of ordinary English society—very necessary for his own sake—and not less necessary for that society. For the heart of no man and of no society can long tolerate a gross fiction within it. What a fiction it must be to give our office as much honour as is given to it, if it deserves no more! To consider it in any sense a religious, or holy, or divine office, if it receives its meaning, its authority, from the very world against the sins of which it is to bear witness, and which it is to purify! And what a mockery and delusion is implied in the name you give—you unconsciously and habitually give—to your own professions! You call these ‘callings’ or ‘vocations;’ you desire that they should not be confounded with mere trades; you boast that they have not a mere mercenary end. In denying that we are called to our ministry by anything more than an earthly summons, that we hold it by anything more than an earthly tenure, you are undermining the sacredness, and with the sacredness the dignity, of the lawyer’s, the physician’s,

the statesman’s character. In saying that our ends are merely sordid, you make the meanest notions of the most mechanical pursuit the standards by which every other is to be judged. No wonder if trade becomes more covetous, more grovelling, more reckless of the human life, and the human soul, when those who should raise it, and teach it its real nobleness, are adopting all its basest maxims for their own guidance.

7. I am well aware that we have ourselves more than you to blame in this matter. I dare not point out the wrong which I think you are prone to commit, and the mischiefs which must ensue to yourselves from that wrong, without desiring that a deeper and more thorough repentance may be granted us for the conduct by which we have justified and fostered your low conception of our duties and of the powers by which alone they can be fulfilled. I am bound also to admit that, as I said just now, our vain and frivolous pretension to a kind of function which God has not given us, and which it is not good for men that we should possess, has also helped to confuse the minds of laymen, and to make them regard with righteous suspicion all language which seems like a claim of priestly dominion. But I apprehend that St. Paul’s words are not only the strongest testimony against these pretensions, but are the only cure for them. Do you really believe that if we thought ourselves ministers of Christ we could assume a stateliness, and formality, and contempt for common things, which our



Master never assumed? Do you think that if He was called a friend of publicans and sinners, we could dare to stand aloof, and allege that it was a duty to draw lines about ourselves, and shut ourselves within a charmed circle, lest we should be defiled? Do you think that if we acknowledged Him truly to be the Son of Man as well as the Son of God, we could think that we were asserting our place as servants of God, as ministers of His children, by disclaiming one human sympathy, or pretending to freedom from one human weakness?

8. No! nor should we do it more if we entered into the import of those other great words of the Apostle—‘Stewards of the mysteries of God’—words which ministers of the New Covenant have often made an excuse for shrouding themselves in a thicker and more impenetrable veil than was ever appointed for those of the Old. The mystery of which we are the stewards is the mystery of the Only-begotten of the Father, becoming one with the most degraded of His creatures; the mystery of His offering a sacrifice to be the perfect Atonement of man to God, and man to man; the mystery that the Chief of all was the servant of all; the mystery that the Name of God is put upon little children, and that they grow up under the love and adoption of the Father, Son, and Spirit; the mystery that heirs of death are received into communion with God, and are permitted with open face to behold His glory, that they may be changed into the

same image. There is enough surely in such mysteries to make men who are entrusted with them tremble at the thought of being servants of a faction, or servants of public opinion. But there is even more to make them ashamed of everything artificial; of all semblances of anything which divides them from those whom their Lord was not ashamed to call brethren. ‘Thou desirest truth in the inward parts.’ ‘Purge me, and I shall be clean’ of all falsehood. ‘Make me to know wisdom secretly,’ must be the prayer of every priest who believes that such treasures are committed to him. But, if he believes that he is a steward of them, he must believe that he exists only to dispense them to the members of God’s family; to give each his rightful portion and inheritance in them. The notion of appropriating them, or that He has a larger interest in them than any sinner whom Christ invites to His marriage-feast, he must reject as devilish.

Here, then, as in all the cases we have considered previously, we are driven back upon the idea of a divine family as the only one which explains any Christian ordinance or Christian service. Take away that idea, and our religion becomes narrow, selfish, superstitious, full of incoherences, full of unreal ceremonies; or else vague, cold, separated from all human affections. Give this idea the prominence which it has in Scripture, and that which seemed a cumbrous machinery becomes instinct with a mysterious energy; a living creature is found to be in the midst of the



wheels, and whither he moves, they move. To how many has the service for the Ordination of Ministers seemed a mere necessary gate of entrance into one of the (so-called) liberal professions! To how many, a somewhat narrow and dangerous bridge, which must be crossed before they can have a right to proclaim with proper effect certain doctrines which are needful for the salvation of souls from future destruction! To how many a way of obtaining, through the bishop's blessing, a more elevated, or, perhaps, a more safe spiritual position, than that of the ordinary layman! But when they actually draw nigh to the altar, and have received the Holy Communion, I cannot help thinking that they are either utterly staggered and scandalised by what they hear, or are raised by it into a higher, a more awful, yet a simpler view of that which lies before them, and of the help which they need, than any of these feelings would imply. They must understand, I think, that they are going on another's work, not on their own; that, unless they are His servants, working for His family, every task they undertake will carry with it a curse; that the doctrines which they preach must not be any which they have got by heart in some school, and which they produce mixed with the persuasions and denunciations which the precedents of the school or their own rhetoric and passion supply, but such as actually testify of God's love to men, such as set Him forth personally, livingly, in His Son; such as tend to preserve and extend Christ's fold; such as are

not tied down to a particular rubric of phrases, but can endure the variety of Scriptural illustrations, and meet the exigencies of human experience; that otherwise, after a little while, the preacher will go on repeating words to which nothing in the hearts of his hearers responds, if he does not commit the heavier sin of uttering that which he has himself ceased to believe. Finally, that the gifts and blessings which are bestowed through the hands of God's higher ministers, must be continually referred to an Invisible Source, else we shall be tempted to degrade our powers into instruments of craft and deception; which is nothing else than making ourselves agents of the devil, rather than agents of God.

What these special gifts and blessings are, what are the distinct offices of our ministry, I propose to enquire in two other discourses. In this I have merely wished to lead you into some reflections on the principle of our ordination. And this not only that you may think rightly of our position, but of yours. If you do not belong to God's redeemed family, our office as ministers means nothing. If you do, each of you has a right to ask—every person in this land has a right to ask—that he may be taught what that family is, what his place in it is; how, if he has forgotten the privileges of it, he may claim them again; what means there are of preserving them. The ministers of God are either sent with these tidings, and with such powers as are necessary to make them effectual, or they should renounce their name. If they



have been sent, God has sent them; no one else can. If God has endued them with their powers, they are such as can be derived from no other. But if they bear this commission to you, then you also are His ministers; then every one of you in his place and office is to wait upon Christ's family; then every one of you, too, has an ordination, not from men, though it may come through men, but from the Lord of all.

## SERMON X.

## DEACONS AND PRIESTS.

Preached in Lincoln's Inn, Septuagesima Sunday, January 27, 1850.

## ACTS VI. 2—4.

*Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.*

THIS passage explains to us the objects for which the office of a Christian Deacon was instituted, and the qualifications which were necessary for it. But it indicates as clearly the distinguishing characteristics of the Christian Priest.

I use this last word, well knowing that various meanings are attributed to it, and that some object to it altogether. I do not assume any special signification. I wish to ascertain from this passage, and from others, what the signification of it is. I take the word priest to be the contracted form of presbyter, which is in general regarded as an innocent expression, even by those who are most jealous of notions which may be latent in it,



or may be imputed to it. I do not even take it for granted that the institution of which the sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles gives us an account, was intended to be a permanent one. That is a question to be considered hereafter. All that the words distinctly affirm is this, that the apostles delegated a portion of the duties which belonged to them, to certain persons who are here called deacons; that these duties were of a very high and venerable kind, which could be well performed only "by men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom;" and yet that they were careful to distinguish them from another set of duties, which are denoted by the words, "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word."

We are reading here of an infant society, one which had just come to life in the midst of a people, who generally regarded it with the most unfriendly feelings. Those who were members of it however were attached, deeply and affectionately attached, to the polity of the nation in which they dwelt. They regarded its polity as divine, they looked upon it as all the more sacred because they believed that *their* Master was the true Lord and head of it, that true King of the Jews, whom the Jews were rejecting. To establish any new institutions was far enough from their object. They did not dream that they had an authority to do it. Their Master had neither by express words, nor it seemed by implication, given them any. But He had called them together as a body of disciples about Him-

self. Out of this body He had chosen His twelve apostles. These He had sent forth preaching His kingdom, and exercising the powers of it; these He had told, in language which they could hardly yet understand, that they were to preach the gospel to all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. They had felt themselves a family while He was upon earth, with Him as the visible centre of it. The Shepherd was smitten, and the sheep were scattered. When He rose from the dead, and stood in the midst of them, and said, 'Peace be unto you; as my Father sent me, so send I you,' and then vanished out of their sight, they felt that a mysterious influence, stronger than they had ever known before, was binding them in one; that One whom they saw but by glimpses with their bodily eyes, had a dominion over them, which they had acknowledged but very imperfectly while they sat with Him in the ship on the lake, or went with Him into the synagogue, or stood with Him by the grave of Lazarus. Even these partial glimpses of His bodily presence were withdrawn. He ascended on high out of their sight. But they waited in Jerusalem for the fulfilment of the promise which He had given them. On the day of Pentecost they felt and knew that they were a society. They had the sympathies of a united body. They had not formed themselves into one; He had formed them into one. They had not devised an organization for themselves; He had framed it. The united society did not



choose the apostles into a certain position; they held that position already. Around them the new baptized formed themselves. They told them of the rights which had been conferred upon them and upon their race; they admitted them into the fellowship and enjoyment of these rights. By degrees, as persecutions made their dispersion necessary, or occasions in which they recognized the voice of God, and not of chance, summoned them hither and thither, they began to fulfil the terms of their original vocation, and to shew that while their number represented the twelve tribes of Israel, they were indeed the appointed messengers to all the families of the earth.

Just such an occasion forced them, before their dispersion, to choose out Stephen and his fellow-labourers. They found, at the very commencement of their work, that there was no security in the tempers of men for the permanence or the unity of the Christian household. The Greek proselytes murmured against the Hebrews that their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. A divine necessity had arisen for a new arrangement. But the new arrangement was not to be the creation of new functions. Christ had sufficiently provided for His Church. They could not add to what He had done; they could only apportion, or rather they felt that He who was the Lord of all circumstances, *was* apportioning, to different husbandmen in His vineyard, works which could not be performed by themselves alone. As Moses, acting by the advice

of his father-in-law, which was truly the counsel of God, deputed different heads of the tribes to decide the smaller causes which he had not time to consider himself; so they looked out men who in his language ‘feared God and hated covetousness,’ to serve tables; that is to say, to take charge of outward, bodily wants, which they perceived that it was an important part of their business to care for, and yet which they could not properly care for in their own persons, if they were to watch over other and deeper interests of the community, upon which its very existence depended. For if the Church was a family of God, and a community of saints, to assert its relation to God, to maintain its spiritual character was to watch over its inward constitution. If that constitution was healthy and vigorous, its outward frame and structure would bear marks of health and vigour. That too must be looked after. Material interests were not to be made light of; Christ did not make light of them. But they would suffer, fatally suffer, if they were supposed to form the substance of the body-politic, instead of its necessary accidents. Here lay the ground and justification of the distinction which the apostles made, and of the form in which they expressed it. ‘It is not fitting,’ they said, ‘that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.’ It would destroy the very principle and purpose of the society to which they ministered, if they did so. They could not merge their higher functions in



the lower, without denying that the Church had that direct relation to God, that inward root, which they professed that it had. They would have converted it into a mere machine for improving the condition of society, and by converting it into such a machine, they would have made it ineffectual for its professed objects. It would only have turned up the surface; therefore it would not have improved the surface. It would not have penetrated to the soil below; therefore it would not have made the fruits better, or the produce greater.

Though the Apostles were, as I said, watching over an infant society, they were not devising a novel principle to meet its emergencies. This distinction between the internal ground or constitution of a society, and its external economy or management, is to be traced in every orderly community which the world has ever seen. It has been felt strongly just in proportion as the body has been firm and coherent, or loose and inorganic. And it has always exhibited itself in the assignment of different functions or offices to different persons. That there should be some persons who express to a nation the idea that its existence has a divine ground, who shall keep up the feeling of a communion between the visible and the invisible world; that this class should be distinct from those who regulate its outward workings, and keep in order the different parts of its machinery; this has been the most serious conviction of all people, the clearest apprehension of

all thoughtful statesmen, however differently they may have embodied it. To these convictions, and this philosophical insight, have corresponded the popular superstitions, which are the corruption of the one, and the political tricks and falsehood, which are the counterfeits of the other. The people have thought that the priest alone was the person who conversed with heaven; that all men except him were merely to grovel upon earth, and take his word for that which is above it. Those who believe that the world is managed by lies, and is the devil's handywork, have thought it well to keep up the impression that society had some mysterious origin, and that there are still some persons who can sway and interpret the councils of Omnipotence. The priests have been glad to avail themselves of each of these miserable tributes to their authority, have been glad to claim for themselves the solitary privilege of intercourse with unseen powers, or the right to preserve the semblance of what has ceased to be real for others or themselves. How fearfully they have paid for their crime in the loss of God's presence, in the necessity of making gods out of their own fancies to compensate for His absence, history tells us clearly and solemnly. But through its melancholy records the fact comes out more and more evidently, that all have demanded this distinction, though all have been disposed to abuse it, and then to lose sight of it; to make it an excuse for unspiritualising the earth, or for treating heaven as unreal; to make the dignity of



the higher and more mysterious officer a plea for his absorbing all duties into his own, or the useful and practical merits of the inferior, a plea for discarding everything which bears witness that man is more than an animal.

Supposing it were true that a Son of God had come into the world for the express purpose of revealing and establishing that relation between man and God which all priesthoods had been assuming to exist or trying to create; supposing He actually did the will of His Father in heaven, and presented that Sacrifice to Him upon which He could look and be satisfied; supposing this Sacrifice did take away the sins of the world, and that men could, with hearts cleansed from an evil conscience, draw nigh to the throne of grace, seeking help in every time of need; suppose the new society to stand upon the belief that it was the beginning of a kingdom of heaven upon earth; that it was composed of those whom God had made His children, and whom He had appointed to declare Him as a Father in Christ to all the ends of the earth; would it seem at first sight as if this Society was *less* in need of the distinction of which I have been speaking than those which had preceded it? Would you say it had *less* occasion to testify by its whole economy to the fact that a communion existed between the visible world and the invisible, or that that communion was grounded in and upheld by a Sacrifice? Would you think that they, of all persons, should leave it to the accidents of human opinion and

belief, whether there should or should not be a testimony to this truth; that they of all people should say, ‘The order of our divine family is *not* to imply or embody these truths upon which it stands?’ To have said this would have been to say that they had been sent into the world in the latter days to annul and set aside all that had been doing in times past, that their Master came to destroy, though He declared that He had come, not to destroy, but to fulfil; that God had not been governing the world hitherto, had not been hewing out stones one by one from their native quarry and preparing them for the temple in which He would dwell for ever.

A great change, however—the greatest conceivable change—had, they believed, been wrought in the condition of the world by the appearing of Christ in it, and by the offering which He had made on the cross. The great Elder Brother of the family had come forth from the Father, and had returned to Him again. He had broken through the veil which hid the mystery of heaven from the worshipper. He had entered Himself into the holiest place for those whose nature He had taken, and whom He had redeemed. He had glorified humanity; the meanest of the race might claim a relationship to the Lord of all, which kings and priests in the old time had not dared to claim. Those who had been sealed with the name of God were a nation of kings and priests. While the new Church fulfilled the anticipations of all past ages, it was bound to shew by



its forms and its language that it did not merely stand on their level; it was bound to raise their thoughts and expressions to a higher power. The language adapted itself to the nature of the society. It was a family—a family looking up to an Elder Brother who represented it in its Father's house. The word presbyter almost inevitably offered itself as the earthly witness and counterpart of that truth. We have no history of its choice and adoption. There is *never* a history of the choice and adoption of that which is essentially true, and belongs to the inner part of humanity; or if you have, it is such a history as you can obtain through scientific investigation of the secret growth of natural things. It might be—no doubt it was—suggested by the names of the offices in the Jewish civil economy, which had become names for the offices in the particular economy of the synagogue. These names had themselves a domestic origin and significance. The Jewish elders, as we are told in Exodus, were taken from the heads of the tribes. He who had borne on His heart the names of all the tribes, the firstborn of many brethren, now associated Himself with every old phrase and familiar experience, and brought all its latent force to light. The presbyter of the infant community—what could he be but the witness of *His* death, and resurrection, and ascension, who had claimed the eternal life, the knowledge of God, for them? what could he be but the brother who shewed by his acts and words that the church was one body consisting of many members, united

in one Head, who presented it continually before God, through whom God's blessing descended upon it. The Apostles in determining that there should be a set of men who did not serve tables, but who devoted themselves to the word of God and prayer, fixed the nature and distinction of their Presbyters. There was no need for a more accurate definition; there was no need to say, this title shall henceforth designate this particular office. The servants of the Church *could* not be mere officials. They must be first of all brothers; their distinction from the rest of the household must be one which never violated the principle on which the rest of the household stood, must be one which always reminded them of that principle. The functions of the Presbyter, when once it was known what his essential characteristic was, would soon ascertain themselves. The person who was to express the union of the Church in its invisible Head and Representative, and God's presence with it even to the end of the world, and the Sacrifice by which He had brought heaven and earth into fellowship, would, of course, be the great minister of that Sacrament which embodied the whole mystery of the divine Communion. That Sacrament was a witness of the equality and brotherhood of those who partook of it. But it was also a witness that their union and equality as brothers stood entirely in their relation to the Father, and to the only-begotten Son. If they sought to make a fraternity not grounded upon this relation, they would break into atoms. If



they were impatient of a visible testimony to that truth, if they did not like an institution which spoke of an elder brother, and tried to shake it off as tyrannical, the result would be the same. They would shew by that act that they misunderstood the constitution of their society; that they did not like to confess Him who had ascended on high as the one bond of their peace. It would happen inevitably that the fellowship would thus become an earthly fellowship, seeking the secret of its cohesion in some earthly and material influences. And the effect of this would not only be that it would lose its divine, theological character; the idea of man as a spiritual, even as an intellectual being, would disappear too. This idea was implied in the old priesthoods of the world; their power was upheld by the tradition of it, even after they had become gross and sensual, lovers of darkness rather than of light, for themselves and for mankind. Still their existence was a protest against the continual tendency of men to think meanly of their own origin and destiny, to treat themselves, or their social life, as the creatures of circumstances.

In denouncing this tendency the infant Church of Jerusalem denounced as strongly the disposition which the holders of spiritual offices had ever manifested to become a caste, and to forget that they were the ministers of a body. They denounced their ambition to be the holders of any intellectual or any spiritual gifts for themselves; they denounced the notion that they had any

spiritual, or any intellectual powers, except those which God bestowed upon them for the sake of the community. They denounced the notion that the priest could be anything, except so far as he acknowledged that heaven was really open, and that there was a real ladder between it and earth, by which the highest might descend, and the lowest might ascend; at the top of which was the voice of God, at the bottom the cry of the feeblest sinner and captive upon earth, ‘Lord, I believe; help Thou my unbelief.’

If you can discover in this institution, thus expounded, anything which belongs especially to the conditions of the Church at Jerusalem, anything which is not of a permanent and universal character, I do not ask you to recognise its obligation merely because you are told that the Apostles sanctioned it. They *might* have meant it only for a time; they *might* only have followed the divine guidance in taking care that the Greek widows should not have cause of complaint against the Hebrews. If they were the beginners of a kingdom which was to have no end, if they were God’s instruments for bringing to light the society which lies beneath all others, the ages to come would test their work; God’s fires would prove it of what sort it was. We ask no other evidence for their work than is supplied by the good and evil deeds of the priests and laymen of Christendom for eighteen centuries, by the condition of the world—let me add, especially by the condition of England—at this day. Let divines and scholars



talk as they like about the *iēpevs* as an extinct officer of an old economy—I come before you, and say, ‘Such an office you must, and will have, and he will be your tyrant, if he is not your minister; and he will keep you divided, if he is not your elder brother. I thank God that his name is changed to that of presbyter, because I think that is a higher and more glorious name, one that testifies of an accomplished, and not a mere expected redemption; of a perfect Mediator and Intercessor, not of one who may possibly intercede with success for his fellows; of a perfectly-reconciled Father, not of one who may become reconciled.’

But I cannot admit that the presbyter does not include the *iēpevs*. I cannot; for I see that our tendency in this day is to lose sight of the fact, that we are all priests to God though we are so fond of using the words; to lose sight of the truth, that Christ is the actual High Priest though we are glad to speak of Him by that name, for the negative purpose of proving that His ministers on earth have no right to be called subordinate priests. If we confess that we bear that title, and all the dignity and responsibility that attach to it, we shall be able to lift up our voices, and proclaim that the chains of the world and the devil have been broken from off the necks of our brethren; we shall have courage to tell the rich that their wealth will be a canker and a curse to them, unless they take up their position as men, and count that which sets them apart from others merely as a trust for their use; we shall

feel ourselves bound to tell the poor that the kingdom of heaven is theirs; that Christ has entered into it for them; that there are no spiritual treasures which are not within their reach, and of which they may not become real, not imaginary possessors. For the sake of the whole land, and the whole family of Christ, and the whole human race, I say it is a solemn duty not to suffer ourselves, from any apparent lowliness, from any fear of the temptation which besets the spiritual teacher and guide, to disclaim a glory for ourselves which the Church in Christ’s name has put upon us. It is our duty, not that we may put a slight upon that other office which grew up in the Church, while it was under Apostolical government, but especially that we may maintain its worth and honour. For while we have lost our sense of the sacredness of the one, we have unawares let the other go into decay. There has arisen in our minds a strange confusion and vacillation respecting the works which God has appointed for us. Now nothing is practical and pious but the serving of tables, and every one is busy about that; all thought, meditation, study of God’s word, seem to be obsolete. Now these outward tasks are proclaimed to be merely secular; the saint has nothing to do with them; the spiritual man must not meddle with what is soiled, vulgar, earthly. We float between earth and heaven, seldom touching the firm ground, scarcely ever soaring into the empyrean. Whereas the Gospel is the good news that heaven and earth



are reconciled. The highest worshipper is the servant of Him who sat at the marriage-feast; the merest server of tables is doing His will, and can only do it because he is inspired by His spirit. The first deacon was filled with the Holy Ghost, and with power; his enemies in the Sanhedrim looked upon his face, and it was as it had been the face of an angel. He, perhaps, before the Apostles, declared boldly that the outward temple would fall, and that the body of Christ was the real Temple of the Holy Ghost. He first was permitted to fall asleep under the stones and the false witnesses. From him came the clearest echo of the prayer, 'Father, forgive them.' Mighty testimony to the grandeur of a vocation which yet had primarily to do with bodily wants; with mundane toils and duties! Mighty witness that he who enters upon such duties is, in the very noblest sense, the deacon or minister of Him who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister! Mighty comfort to those who are living amidst the groans and murmurs of multitudes, such as the Church of Jerusalem could never have dreamed would have been gathered into a city or a land, that God looks upon them as parts of His family, and has provided an order to wait upon them, and to enter into all their meanest concerns, and to be the instruments of raising them into the condition of human beings, into the place of fellow-workers with Him. Mighty call upon presbyters and deacons to be up and doing, to be understanding why God has

appointed each; what the distinction of their offices is; what the harmony; why neither can exist without the other; why God's family demands the labours of both.

I have told you often that I do not mean to plead for the language of our services, but to use it as an instructor in our duties, as the explanation of our difficulties. I offer no apology for those expressions in our Ordination of Priests, when the bishop lays his hands upon the head of a weak youth, and says, 'Receive the Holy Ghost for the office of a priest in Christ's Church!' I say boldly, that youth ought to believe that he is endowed with this power; else he will not do Christ's work, or feel his own nothingness, or be the helper and deliverer of his brethren. I do not offer excuses for the Church because she has used these words in one of her services, and not in the other; it was the necessary consequence of her observing the distinction which the Apostles drew between the duty of giving themselves to the word of God and prayer, and that of serving tables, that she should speak of the priest's as emphatically the spiritual office. I do not mean to argue on behalf of her restriction of absolution to the presbyter. I do not know how she could express to us the greatness and power of that service in which God speaks to the oppressed and bruised hearts of His children, and reclaims them for the fold from which they have strayed, otherwise than by assigning this as one of the most blessed privileges of those who exist to set forth the transactions of God



with the inner spirits of men. I do not need to explain why nevertheless we read that passage which says that the deacons were men full of the Holy Ghost in the office for the Ordination of Deacons, because I apprehend that the same principle which asserts the dignity of man as a spiritual being, and asserts that there are special gifts bestowed upon those who are to educate him to a sense of his spiritual position, attributes the right conduct of every work whatsoever to the Spirit of God. I need not shew you why the priest should be the person who leads us to the Communion of Christ's body and blood,—why the highest function of the deacon, that which interprets all his others, is to assist in the distribution of the elements. If we have understood at all their relation to each other, and the relation of the divine feast to the order of the Christian family, we shall find in this distinction the very law which makes the ministry of the spirit the highest of all, the ministry of the body sacred and divine.

## SERMON XI.

## CONSECRATION OF BISHOPS.

Preached at Lincoln's Inn, Sexagesima Sunday, February 3, 1850.

## MATTHEW XXIII. 9.

*Call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.*

THOSE who read the Scriptures with a desire to find contradictions in them, will never miss the gratification which they seek. They will not have to pass from one book to another, in order to prove that they are inconsistent. The same book, often the same chapter, will supply them with all that they want. The Evangelist who reports our Lord to have said "He that is not with Me is against me," will also tell us that He said "He that is not against us, is on our part." St. Matthew who gives these words in the Sermon on the Mount, "He that shall say to his brother, Thou fool, is in danger of hell-fire," in the chapter from which my text is taken, introduces Him who gave the command saying, "Ye fools and blind." St. Paul we may suppose had heard the command, "Swear not at all," yet, as St. Augustine remarks, he has adopted the formula of an oath in the fifteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Corinthians, "I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus" *νὴ τὴν ὑμετέραν καύχησιν.*



Every one must see that these inconsistencies might have been avoided. The least dexterous sophist would have omitted them. He might have fallen into anachronisms which the skill and learning of a Bentley would have been required to trace out: he certainly would not have allowed any glaring contrast to remain on the surface. Why, then, are they here if they are not to be explained by that ready resource of modern criticism, the supposing different scribes of opposite opinions to have been at work, and a third to have awkwardly blended their statements? I believe every real student of Scripture and of his own heart learns why they are there, and why he would suffer greatly for the want of them. The first sentence "He that is not with Me is against Me," would be the enunciation of a truth, but of an imperfect truth, a truth liable to the greatest perversion, liable to produce the greatest falsehood, practices most alien from the spirit of the Gospel and the express commands of Christ, if it were not for that other precept, which seems at first sight to restrain and weaken it, which, when it is considered in reference to the circumstances that called it forth, gives it a force which it would not otherwise have had. How many persons have practised the most miserable frauds upon their consciences, by attempting to abstain from the perilous words, "Thou fool," while they were indulging the habit of contempt and scorn which our Lord is condemning as the last and most awful state into

which a soul can come. How needful that they should be brought to understand the true *sense* of his words, to feel them in all their tremendous reality, by being shewn, through His own divine example and that of His Apostle, that the mere words which were so carefully eschewed, may be perfectly innocent, may be expressions of a righteous and godly indignation! How impossible it is to understand the precept, "Swear not at all," if we do not connect it with reverence for Him whose throne is heaven and the earth His footstool, who dwells in the holy city, who numbers the hairs of the head; if we forget that the mere form of an oath may be the expression of that very awe and reverence, which our Lord knew that it was our continual temptation, and our greatest misery to lose.

It has been very common to quote the words 'Call no man your father upon earth,' to prove the sinfulness of the practice which we have adopted, of calling our Bishops, 'Fathers in God.' 'If the words of Christ mean any thing,' we are told, 'they must be intended to prohibit such language as this; you have adopted it in simple defiance of His authority. Though the phrase perhaps may not be absolutely necessary to the Episcopalian theory, though a person might confess the institution of bishops to be useful, necessary, even divine, without sanctioning this language, yet the easiness with which you have fallen into it, the difficulty which you have found of not connecting the bishop with the Father, shews



that there is something vicious in the idea; that you are at least at every moment in hazard of trifling with a most sacred command.' Now I admit at once that it is very difficult, and has always been found very difficult, to separate these two ideas from each other. I will go further, and say, that I believe any notion of the office of a bishop, which does not acknowledge this connexion, is a very worthless notion, that apart from it, the theory of episcopacy is a withered, sapless, lifeless stock, which has no root and can bear no fruit. I claim all the disgrace which belongs to our popular expression as belonging to the thing itself. A bishop I take to be a Father in God, and therefore, and therefore only, to possess any dignity or to be entitled to any reverence.

Having taken this ground, I am of course obliged first of all to shew that I am not offending against our Lord's express decree, more than He himself offended against it, when He called the Pharisees fools, or His Apostle, when he applied the same epithet to those who asked, in reference to the Resurrection, 'with what body do they come?' In such a case we should resort to no special-pleading at all. The thought might suggest itself that men who will be literal, should be held to the letter, that they should be called upon to go the whole length of saying, that we ought not to call our natural parents, fathers, even though our Lord denounced the Pharisees for explaining away the force of the fifth Command-

ment, and though St. Paul called it 'the first commandment with promise.' But I should be very unwilling to resort to such arguments, if they were ever so much justified by the practice of opponents. And they are quite unnecessary. If the commandment is what it is assumed to be, St. Paul violated it, not once or twice, not in some sudden expression; but habitually, deliberately. 'Ye may have many teachers in Christ,' he says, 'but ye have not many *fathers*; for I have begotten you in the Gospel.' You cannot read any one of his Epistles with care or thought, without perceiving that his whole mind was penetrated by the thought and feeling which this passage expresses. The character in which he complains that the Corinthians do not regard him, is that in which he wished Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, to regard him. All the sorrow he expresses for their errors and ingratitude, is the sorrow of one who felt towards them as a father, and wished them to look up to him as children.

You will see exactly how far this precedent goes. Of course, it does not prove that bishops in our day, or in any day, have a right to the title which St. Paul claimed for himself. That title might belong to him specially or individually. It might belong to him simply because it was by his means that these disciples were converted and brought into the Church. I do not produce it as a warrant for our mode of speaking; but simply as a proof that if St. Paul's judgment is to be taken, men may be called fathers upon earth,



without infringing our Lord's precept. The command is either absolute against all words which indicate spiritual paternity, or each particular use of such words must be tried upon its own merits. It is not absolute, or St. Paul is the greatest offender against it. I do not in the least shrink from any tests which may be applied to ascertain whether we are employing it in a right or in an irreverent way.

In my last sermon, I spoke of the name Presbyter; I considered whence that name had been brought into the Christian Church, what must have been its significance, as soon as it was adopted there. Christ the Elder Brother of the family, the Only-begotten Son of that Father, who had claimed those whose nature He took, as children in Him; this was the idea which had filled the minds of the early disciples, which could not but give a form and colour to all their language. The institutions of Moses, or the forms of the Synagogue, might suggest the title of Elder. But the moment a believer in Jesus Christ pronounced it, a new and deeper meaning was imparted to it. A new meaning, and yet really its simple and original meaning, that which was associated with the ordinances of the family, rather than with the economy of the state. The two, as I have so often remarked, had been beautifully blended in the Jewish constitution. Those who received the Law, never forgot that they were children of Israel, children of Abraham, never forgot that God's covenant was with them

in that character, that He was the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. Their prophets never suffered them to lose sight of this connexion, nor of that more profound one which subsisted between God's relations with His creatures, and the creature's relations with each other. To bring out the full meaning and reality of this divine mystery, to shew how it lay at the foundation of His kingdom, was only possible for One, who could say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." His Apostles, whose work on earth it was to exhibit this kingdom in its fulness and its power, could not but feel that every part of human life was an image of the Divine. Their own acts and offices were intelligible to them, only as they reflected the acts and offices of which their discourses testified. The Presbyter corresponded to that servant of the Old Covenant who entered into the Holy Place, and presented the imperfect sacrifice. The Presbyter bore witness by his acts and his name, as well as his words, that the sacrifice had been completed, that the Elder Brother had gone into the house not made with hands, into the real presence of God. But if men had been brought into that presence as they had never been brought into it before, if the Son had indeed revealed the Father, could the new dispensation merely answer to the old? Must it not speak of something which the other could not speak of? Must not the Elder Brother imply a Father? Evidently the Apostolical office was one, which though closely con-



nected with all that had been before, though bound by the most obvious links to the old tribes, yet had a comprehensiveness which could not attach to any office in the Hebrew commonwealth. Though the work of those who belonged to it, might for a time be limited to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, yet even the character of their message to these lost sheep imported that they had a universal mission, that they were to fulfil the promises made to the fathers, by proclaiming the heir of David's throne as the ruler over the Gentiles. And this office was emphatically *the* Christian office, the one which Christ Himself established, the one which was to be significant of the end of His coming. Can you wonder that the Apostles should have felt their office to be characteristically a fatherly office, or that the Apostle of the Gentiles, the one to whom was imparted the fullest sense of the largeness of the new kingdom, of its being a kingdom which must take the place of the old Jewish economy, should have put forth this claim in behalf of his own calling, with even more courage and frequency than all the rest? Or can you wonder that when the Apostles had left the world, and the different bodies which they had established found themselves under the care of different angels, overseers, ministers—call them what you please—all the other feelings and associations which those different names indicated, should have always had a tendency to gather themselves into one, the chief shepherd or over-

seer of each flock in each city being regarded and described as its father? Do you suppose that this was a metaphorical phrase expressing the kindness of some particular pastor, but not applicable to an order? No doubt there was the greatest difference in the force of the phrase when it was applied to the angel of the Church of Philadelphia, and to the angel of the Church of Laodicæa. The one, we are told, was full of zeal, love, patience; the other was neither hot nor cold. The people in the first case will have felt that their pastor looked upon them as children, and they will habitually have thought of him as a Father. There will have been little to remind the Laodicæans that he who was looking over them had any sense of relationship to them; they will have either ceased to use the phrases which denoted *their* relationship to him, or the phrases will have become idle, unmeaning, dead. But why was this? Because the Philadelphians felt that their minister did, and the Laodicæans felt that theirs did not, fulfil the idea of a Christian overseer. The one was a father, not in virtue of some personal qualities which he had independently of his position, but simply in virtue of his so entirely understanding his position, and being enabled by God's Spirit to act it out. To suppose any other view of the case, would be to suppose that the pastor is not God's servant, called to the work which is fittest for him, and exhibiting in that work something of the character which He has bestowed, and which is the likeness of his own,



but a man having some peculiar or inherent excellence which would have been just as suitable in any other sphere, and which was to draw forth an admiration and affection simply towards the human object. Such a notion is utterly alien from the idea of the Gospel, and is the source of all idolatry. But if the other and godly view is adopted, the paternal character cannot be looked upon as some agreeable accident, some graceful ornament of the Episcopacy. The feeling of the Church in that age and in all ages must be right, that herein lies the essence of the office. The oversight is the business, the *ἐπιτον* of it. The word Overseer came gradually to be used as the especial designation of the chief minister in each church, because it denoted happily and conveniently the general care and government of him who had the charge of the whole flock, and who directed the acts and movements of the particular shepherds. It superseded partly, though not wholly, the word Apostle,—since that, according to its etymology, pointed rather to the Missionary than to the settled and limited Pastor, and because there was a reverence due to those who had witnessed the resurrection, and who had represented the passage from the old economy to the new. But no change in the name could affect the radical nature of the vocation. Greek, Latin, and barbarian habits of mind might give to mere official titles, and forms, a varying signification. But Greeks, Latins, and barbarians, must feel that a Father was a homely, common, human

expression, in which they had all an equal right; which had nothing to do with differences of laws, rank, race; which therefore on the face of it was Christian and Catholic. And if they looked below the mere appearance of Christianity into the inward heart of it, they found that this name was essentially Christian, because it was not merely human but divine, because the appropriation of it to the overseer of each distinct portion of the Christian family bore witness of the one Father in heaven, in whom that portion was united with every other.

But this sense of the connexion between the numerous visible fathers and the one invisible Father grew weaker; bishops did not hold fast the faith that their names and their tasks witnessed to His continual Episcopacy over the baptised Family which He had gathered together out of all lands, over the race which He had redeemed in His Son, and of which this universal family was the representative and the first-fruits. More and more there was a cry for a One Father *on earth*, from whom all the particular fathers should confess that they derived their authority, to whom they should look up, and should teach the whole body of the Church to look up, as its real Centre. How deeply rooted the name Father was in men's hearts; how much it was the specially Christendom name; how secondary and subordinate all others were to it, was made manifest by the way in which he who drew to himself the honours of the Chief Bishop clung to this domestic title in pre-



ference to every other. It was regarded as the one upon which any person holding such an authority as he held, must rest. Amidst all the arguments which Gallican bishops held with the Italian Bishop respecting the legal and formal limits of their respective authorities, amidst all the controversies of German Emperors with the same Italian bishop to determine the relations between the civil and spiritual jurisdiction, one perceives how deeply this feeling was at work. ‘Be your arguments ever so accurate and learned, based upon ever so many decrees of councils, or ever so much knowledge of antiquity—whether these claims to a Constantine donation, and those Isidorian decrees, are genuine or spurious—what the people, clergy and laity alike, want, is a fatherly government, and that we must have, and that must be higher than any other.’ When popes relied upon this belief and conviction, they trampled upon even the justest claims of sovereigns who, on mere grounds of state policy, and of bishops who, on mere grounds of ecclesiastical law and precedent, resisted them. Their power was practically weakened by that which seemed to give it strength, the union of their claims as local Italian sovereigns with their claims as universal Fathers. The attempt to make themselves the great dogmatists of the Church only shewed how much they were at the mercy of particular schoolmen, how little they did in fact decide anything for themselves. Their infallibility might mean anything, everything, or nothing. But their fatherhood

was a perpetual hint of something which the hearts of individual men, and the whole society of the Middle Ages, felt that it had need of, and could not part with. And so the conviction of its reality lasted on in spite of the monstrous oppressions and venality of the court whence these pretensions issued, in spite of the glimpses which statesmen, ecclesiastics, poets, had of the earthly machinery which was putting on the semblance of a divine and spiritual operation.

But our Lord’s words cannot pass away. He had said, ‘Call no man your father on earth, for one is your Father, which is in heaven.’ That this sentence did not mean, ‘Call no men your *fathers* on earth,’ I have shewn already by evidence which I hope will be satisfactory to those who do not wish to set one part of Scripture against another. That they did mean something very serious and awful; that they did point to some tendency in men, which He who knew what was in men was aware of, and which He desired that His disciples should be aware of, our reverence for Him must have compelled us to believe, even if we knew nothing of the way in which the prophecy was fulfilled. But we have the history of centuries to illustrate and expound it, though it may be doubted whether, even yet, we have any of us drawn out sufficiently the commentary which that history supplies. One great assumption of the pope was felt and detected at the time of the Reformation. It was seen that his



claim to be the High Priest of the world was incompatible with the dignity of Him who had entered for us once into the holy place. Christ was acknowledged for the individual soul, as the one perfect Justifier, and Advocate, and Intercessor; whatever interfered with these offices of His was rightfully and manfully cast aside in spite of all precedents and rules which might be alleged on its behalf. What are rules and precedents when the foundation of man's existence and his relation to his Lord are at stake? With this feeling of Christ as the deliverer of the soul was associated (for they could not be separated) a recognition of Him as the Elder Brother of the household. But I cannot perceive that *this* conviction was at all as strongly brought out at that time as the other. And therefore I can understand why that portion of Christendom which had always been most impressed by the social aspects of Christianity, rather than by those which we are wont to regard as most important, should have been shaken, but not reformed by the movement. They wanted a witness that there is some great power to hold men together, as well as that each man is a responsible being who must for himself believe and for himself be judged. Unless they were told more distinctly how the divine order supplied that which its earthly counterfeit had attempted to supply, there was something in their hearts besides its evil tendencies which held them fast bound to a system that always promised a bro-

therhood and a fatherhood, not only for individuals and nations, but for the human race.

There are those who think that our Reformers, by steering a middle course between the foreign Reformers and the Romanists, secured that ecclesiastical purification which the Teutonic nations demanded, and that ecclesiastical order which the Latin nations sighed for. If they had struck out such a middle course—if they had been permitted to strike out any course at all for themselves—I believe they would have dissatisfied Teutons and Latins equally; would have produced an ecclesiastical system in which the strength and vitality of both the elements that composed it would have been wanting. Just so far as our divines have dreamed of such a scheme, or have been enabled to construct one—on paper, I mean, for it can never exist as a reality—out of the materials which they found in our land, just so far, I believe, they have been the objects of just contempt to both their critics; just so far the poor people who want bread, and not stones, have looked up to them for nourishment in vain.

What we have to thank God for is, that He did not suffer the Reformers of our land in the sixteenth century to take their own ways, but compelled them to walk in His ways; what we honour them for is, that, on the whole, though sometimes with natural reluctance, with many human deflections, they submitted to His guidance. So far as mortal self-will could rough hew His ends, so far the self-will of us, and of our fathers, has done it. We



praise His name that we have not yet been able to do it effectually and completely. He ordained that our Reformation should turn upon the protest of our Sovereign against the interference of the Bishop of Rome with his own Supremacy, instead of its being the protest of the people against his usurpation over their hearts and consciences. Hence it came to pass that the order of society, civil and ecclesiastical, remained as it was—with this grand difference, that the nominal father of Christendom was not acknowledged as the head of this order; that the national Sovereign was. So great a change might well seem, to men as noble as Sir Thomas More, to involve the denial of spiritual government in the land at all; there was that fearful peril latent in the proclamation; his death may well be looked on as a solemn warning of temptations to which the next age shewed that we were liable, and which men of the most opposite views and notions to his discovered and denounced. But side by side with this danger there lay quite infinite blessings which he did not perceive. The loss of that nominal Fatherhood *might* lead to the confession of the real Fatherhood; the bishops, divested of their subjection to a chief bishop, might feel what the name of Fathers in God implied; they might assert a spiritual government in the highest sense of the word; they might teach the sovereigns of the land that their Catholicity was far more real and practical than it had ever been, because that which made it degrading, servile,

anti-national, yes, and anti-human, was taken away. I do not say that our bishops did heartily entertain this belief themselves, or teach it to the kings. The belief of a direct responsibility to a divine King, which certainly saved our Tudor princes, especially the last of them, from being the most intolerable of tyrants, and made them real springs of life and energy to the land, was exchanged under the next dynasty for the doctrine of a Godhead residing in the person of the Sovereign—a doctrine which, in the mouth of prelates, as well as other courtiers, seemed continually to approach, though we may hope it never passed, the boundary which separates loyalty from blasphemy. The punishment surely followed hard upon the sin, and visited those most whose offence was greatest. The bishops began to think of themselves more and more as mere officers of the visible Sovereign, not as servants of the King of kings. They did not indeed confound their office with that of the monarch; they were most careful to say that the one belonged to the ecclesiastical part of the system the other to the civil; they were most urgent with him to believe that the ecclesiastical part, though it did homage to the civil, was still, in essence and origin, the higher. But such distinctions availed nothing for the people, and very little for themselves. An ecclesiastical system was not what the one wanted, but a divine family; the others, in their desire to be prelates, forgot that they were fathers. Then came the fierce war against prelacy in Scotland and here; one for



which those who were overcome in it had, perhaps, more cause to be thankful than those who triumphed. For these last straightway produced their ecclesiastical system. The only protection against the one usurping bishop was to make a covenant against all bishops. The presbyter was the chief officer of the Church. Woe to those who set up any over him! But what was the presbyter? Was he any longer the elder brother? Was he the witness, by his words or acts, of Him who had gone up into the Father's house? The idea of a divine Family, which had become all too weak among Episcopalianists, lost its very sign and tradition in the formal and negative scheme of their opponents. Happily the domestic feeling was kept alive in the Scotch peasants by the reading of the Bible, and they clung with passionate zeal to a title, which, though it might often denote little more than the office of the preacher, could not be wholly divorced, especially in times of trial and suffering, from its truer and more living sense. *Presbyterianism* is by the law of its existence dogmatical, exclusive, merely protesting. It lives by its connexion with a severe Calvinism; it sinks into latitudinarianism, or breaks from its shell, and rises into a higher region, the moment it comes into contact with the belief of God's love and Christ's sacrifice for mankind. But the *Presbyter* is a name of life and power. It speaks of a real relationship between Christ and his shepherds—between Christ and his flock. It

testifies in Scotland as in England to the basis upon which the Church in each nation and the Church universal must stand. And let us never deny it because much shame and humiliation may accompany the confession—the Covenant against Prelacy did involve the assertion that God was the actual ruler of the land—an assertion which no nation and no Church can dispense with. If Episcopacy does not provide for that assertion, if openly or covertly we as Episcopalianists try to set it aside, the Scotch were and are right in repudiating it and in denouncing us. I have no hope of seeing Episcopacy prevail—no wish to see it prevail—except because it is the effectual defender of this truth, because it is that which translates a mere Jewish Theocracy into a Christian Family.

It is not, brethren, in any spirit of glorification that I would refer to our Service for the Consecration of Bishops, as a precious memorial of what we are meant to be, and of what, without any other revolution than that which is implied in deep repentance for our forgetfulness of God's gifts, we may yet become. If you appeal to books of argument in favour of Episcopacy, you will find proofs drawn out in very exact and logical method to shew that such an ordinance must belong to the Church, and that all who have not that ordinance are not members of it. Here you will find no statements respecting Episcopacy, but the actual sending forth of a Bishop to be the shepherd of a flock, the Father of a family which God has committed to him, over which he is to



watch, for which he is to give an account. Is there not the width of a whole heaven between one of these modes of presenting the subject and the other? In the first, all is dry, cold, exclusive, negative. What is this necessary ordinance? How is it connected with Christian life and doctrine? The question is asked, and the mere arguer is silent. He brings forth his title-deeds; the worth of the estates which they assure to us is not his concern. But the worth of the estate is all that our practical countrymen care for, and if we enter into the spirit of our Service, we shall be rejoiced that it is so. We shall tell them that these Fathers-in-God are witnesses to us, one and all, that God is our Father, the witnesses of this truth to the outcasts in our country and our towns, the witnesses of it to our brethren who have left us to found distant colonies and to be the beginners of new worlds. We shall tell them that these Fathers in God testify of an universal brotherhood, which has no limits of language or of race, that they do not testify of the exclusion or the excision of any portion of the Church, but rather that all are one in Christ Jesus, that all who are baptized in the one uniting Name, constitute a portion of God's great family, and are intended to bring the whole earth within the circle of that family. The noblest of all the adversaries of Episcopacy, in a work written expressly to confound its pretensions, prayed that the Prince of all the kings of the earth would come forth out of His bridal chamber, and put on

the robes of his visible majesty, for that all the earth was sighing to be renewed. We trust and believe that he is offering that prayer still amid the saints before the throne, that (his eyes being cleared from all mists and his lips purged) he is joining with the martyrs beneath the altar and with the suffering millions upon the earth, in beseeching that God's long controversy may terminate, and His fatherly government be fully recognized throughout the universe. We believe that we are entering into the spirit and force of that prayer, when we desire that all the Bishops in our own land, and in every land, may understand the greatness of the work which is committed to them, may understand that they are meant to be the instruments in God's hands of healing the strifes in His family, of making it indeed such a family as the elder Brother and Priest of it may present perfect and spotless to His Father and our Father.



## SERMON XII.

## COMMINATION SERVICE.

Preached in Lincoln's Inn, Quinquagesima Sunday,  
February 10, 1850.

## MALACHI IV. 6.

*And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.*

NEXT Wednesday is the day appointed for reading the Commination Service. That service has often been complained of as one which savours of the Law rather than of the Gospel, which curses instead of blessing.

Many think that they ought to absent themselves from church on Ash-Wednesday, because, if they come, they will be obliged to pronounce sentence upon their neighbours or themselves. Nevertheless, this Office winds up the series on which I have been commenting. I am not in the least desirous to pass it by; nor do I think that the impression which it leaves on your mind will be at variance with that which you have received from any that have gone before.

Brethren, there are two methods—and, I believe, only two methods—which a Church, or the minister of a Church, can adopt in speaking to the members of it. Either they must be

treated as, for the most part, exiles from the family of God, aliens from the Covenant of promise, a few being exempt from the general doom, and admitted into a sacred and safe enclosure. Or else they must be treated as all members of God's family, all as included within the scope of His Covenant, all as sharing the privileges, and therefore the responsibilities, of heirs of grace.

It behoves the preacher who takes the first view carefully to divide his congregation into those who require warning, and those who are entitled to consolation, to bid the one tremble at a doom which, nevertheless, it is possible for them to avoid; to bid the others exult in a hope which yet, if they mix too freely with their erring brethren, may be dulled or weakened. He who holds the other principle to be the true one, must exhort all to claim that state which has been given them, to lay hold of that hope which belongs to them, must warn all that God's curse is still resting upon every evil way, and that whoever walks in that way, let his privileges be as grand as God Himself can make them, let his condition be the condition of an angel, comes under the curse. Now I have maintained in my previous Sermons, that our Prayer-Book, in every one of its offices, acts upon the last of these methods, repudiates the other. I maintain, therefore, that it would be inconsistent as well as unfaithful, if it did not speak to you, to all the people of this land, to saints and sinners, clergymen and laymen, in the language of the Commination.



What is that language? We attach a certain vague, mysterious notion to the word *curse*. Its real meaning is much more tremendous than this notion, and yet the first statement of it might seem like a relief to our minds, as if the alarm with which it inspired us had been exaggerated. A curse means a separation, or a cutting off. What the Commination Service declares is, 'that he who maketh any carved or molten image to worship it, he who curseth his father or mother, who removeth his neighbour's landmark, who maketh the blind to go out of the way, who perverteth the judgment of the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, who smiteth his neighbour secretly, who lieth with his neighbour's wife, who taketh reward to slay the innocent, who putteth his trust in man, and taketh man for his defence, and in his heart goeth from the Lord,' is separating himself from his proper home and dwelling-place, is cutting himself off from his rightful inheritance; that he may make this separation and excision an utter and absolute one. The Service draws no distinctions, enters into no refinements; it pronounces, in the words of God's law, that he who takes any one of these courses, whatever his motives be for taking it, whatever the pleas to his conscience may be for it, whatever contrivances he may use not to bring his doings exactly within the letter of the prohibition, does yet, assuredly, put himself at a distance from God, and choose another service than His. He may fancy the molten image may promote his devotion; he may

have much provocation to curse his father or mother; he may find it highly convenient to his own interest, and he thinks, to the public interest, to remove his neighbour's landmarks; he may smite his neighbour secretly with the tongue or the pen, and not with the sword; he may propose to himself most religious ends in all these acts; every one of them may be done for the sake of advancing some principle which he believes to be necessary, or denouncing some error which he believes to be fatal. The result is the same: he is at war with the righteousness of the universe, he is out of fellowship with the living and true God. Unless there be a return and a reconciliation, the strife will grow every day greater, his enmity to his Maker will become fixed and hopeless.

I have followed literally the words of the Service in this statement. It does not say cursed *will* be every one who follows this or that evil course, but cursed *is* he. He has put himself into this evil position. It is not the punishment that may follow from his acts which is first or chiefly spoken of. The state into which those acts have brought him constitutes his misery and curse. The heaviest punishment he can look for, is that that state should continue, that he should go on living as he does live, that he should be for ever what he has made himself. For to be alienated from goodness and truth, to be shut up in selfishness and hatred, to be every day feeling a stronger wish that God were something else than He is, something else than a perfectly pure, and holy,



and loving Being, something else than the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; or that He did not exist, that there were no God; this is hell. To be in this state is to be in the deepest pit of hell. To be without God, to have an incapacity for knowing Him, and trusting in Him, and loving Him, to have the sense of a presence which must be ever far off, of One with whom we are at variance, not because He is ungracious and unmerciful, but because He is all-gracious and all-merciful, this surely is that prison-house, that Gehenna, which our Lord tells us of; this must be that death in which those dwell who shew no pity to Him, inasmuch as they shew it not to the least of His brethren.

When I say that the Church speaks of a present curse, I do not therefore mean for a moment to explain away those words which clearly speak of the future. But I wish you to perceive that the future is essentially connected with the present, and is intelligible to us only from the present. What is evil now, will be evil hereafter; what is good now, will be good hereafter. The evil may be expanded and developed, the good may be expanded and developed in a way we cannot think or dream of; but the essence, the substance of each, must remain the same.

The heart and reason which are in sympathy with God's love and truth, may hereafter have for their instruments senses which shall be able to take in all the harmonies of sight and sound; but the growing capacity of the heart for the

perfect Love, the growing capacity of the reason for the perfect Truth, will still constitute the true blessedness and glory of the man, and give those sights and sounds all their worth. And so the heart and reason which have been shrivelled into utter selfishness, which delight in falsehood, and are ever creating falsehoods, may distort every object of the senses, may make every fair thing that is looked upon, loathsome, every melody a discord; but still that inward, secret derangement of the spirit, which changes light into darkness, and invests God with the attributes of the devil, is more terrible than all outward inversions and confusions, is the one sole cause of them, and gives them all their malignity and misery. This state of the spirit then is that which the Church fixes upon and denounces. In bidding him who is in it flee from the wrath to come, she bids him first and chiefly flee from the wrath which is abiding on him now.

As this view of a present evil does not interfere with the view of evil hereafter, but gives it reality and definiteness, so the view which I have taken of man, as the author of his own curse, does not interfere with the language which this Service borrows from Scripture, when it speaks of God cursing an individual or a nation, but rather shews the possibility and the veracity of such expressions. For if God suffers an individual or a land to go on in the dark and evil way which the one or the other has chosen, if He leaves them free to follow their own devices till they



have made iniquity a law, till they are entirely estranged from His righteousness, surely in the strictest sense of the words He smites that land or that man with a curse. Such a sentence, fearful beyond any other that man can conceive, the Prophet, in the words of my text, warns the Israelites to expect: such a sentence the Commination Service this week will warn us may be in store for ourselves. Nearly four centuries and a half passed away before the words of Malachi were actually verified. During all that time, visitations and trials manifold were coming upon that people for their evil doings. Once it seemed as if Antiochus Epiphanes would actually have destroyed the worship of the Temple, as if every priest would have become faithless, as if the abomination of desolation would not only have been set up, but would actually have remained in the Holy Place. Yet God did not then smite the land with His curse, His judgments brought forth some of the noblest heros of the Jewish commonwealth, witnesses of God worthy to be reckoned with Moses and Joshua, and the Prophets of old. But the day did come. In an age of religious profession it came; when idolatry and idolaters were denounced and hated it came. Then was it that the voice was heard in the Holy Place, saying, 'Let us depart.' Then was it that the curse which had not reached the vitals of the nation when Jeroboam made Israel to sin, when Ahab sold himself to work iniquity, when Ahaz set up the Syrian altar, when Manasseh offered

children to Moloch, came upon them to the uttermost. Let us earnestly consider the words of the Prophet, that we may know why it came upon them, and what refuge they might have found from it, if they had known the things that belonged to their peace.

1. I should deal falsely with this part of Scripture, and falsely with my own conscience, if I did not at once confess that a great part, by far the greatest part, of Malachi's prophecy, is directed against the *Priests* of the land. It is the subject with which he begins. Evidently it was pressing upon his mind in every word that he spoke. I know that there are passages in this prophecy which the priests, and especially the sect of the Pharisees, will have quoted very often, and which have been quoted in all ages since, as especially bearing upon the sins of the rulers of the land, in that they withheld the tithes and offerings which were due to the House of the Lord. But whatever these words may mean—and I do believe they had a meaning for that time, and for all times—it must, I think, have been great treachery and hypocrisy in the Jewish priests, it will be treachery and hypocrisy in us, to put these words forward, as if they were the most characteristic words of the book, when so very much more of it is devoted to the ill doings of the House of Levi, to *their* selfish robbery of God, to *their* profaning the table of the Lord, to *their* corrupting of the covenant; when it was said to them expressly, 'Therefore have I made you



contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the Law. Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers? when again the highest promise of blessing to the land is, ‘He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.’ I say it was a very terrible oversight, a proof of almost judicial blindness, if the Jewish priests at any time passed by these awful denunciations, and this blessed promise, only to fix their minds on that which concerned some other people and not themselves, only to make out that God was angry because *they* had been defrauded. For surely the priests in every time of the Jewish nation, from Malachi to its final extinction, as in every earlier time of the history, needed the terror of these admonitions, and the fulfilment of that promise. Surely they needed it then especially, when the Messenger of the Covenant came suddenly to His Temple, when the great Refiner actually appeared; for they shewed that instead of being able to abide the day of His coming, instead of being eager to have their dross burnt up and their chaff winnowed away, they could only accuse Him of casting out devils through the prince of the devils, they could only rend their clothes and say, ‘He hath spoken blasphemy, He is guilty of death.’

2. The sins of the Priests—what I may call the religious sins of the nation—are those upon which this Prophet and all the Prophets dwell with most emphasis, not only as being the worst in themselves, but those from which the others were derived. Because *they* had departed out of the way, and had denied that God was a God of judgment, the sorcerers, the adulterers, those who swore falsely, those who oppressed the hireling in his wages the widow and the fatherless, and that turned away the stranger from his right, had multiplied. Against these the prophet declares that God would be a swift witness; He would enter into judgment with them. The sins, that is to say, which hid themselves from the eye of the ordinary judge, against which legislation was a very imperfect protection or no protection at all; the secret dishonest trafficking with natural powers; the abuse of knowledge to the purposes of deceit and mischief; the violations of the marriage-vow, which were brought before no human tribunal, and endured no apparent punishment; the false oath, which really deceived and which betrayed a false heart, though there might be no tangible act of perjury; the refusal to pay the workman that which would enable him to live, though it was justified by all the usage of employers, the custom of trade, the rules of the market; the carelessness of the fatherless and the widow, though no statute defined who should care for them; the neglect of the stranger, though each man might plausibly ask, ‘Is he my neighbour?’



bour?" "Am I his keeper?"—these commissions and omissions would surely be seen by Him who was really the King, and Judge, and Lawgiver of the land; they would be curses, separating the people further and further from Him; they would surely and effectually destroy the inward heart of the nation, let the surface of it look as respectable, as decent, as religious as it might. Every one who reads the Gospels must see how under all the religious profession, and seeming earnestness, which characterised the leading Jewish school at the time of our Lord's coming, these secret moral diseases were infecting and drying up the life-blood of society in Palestine. No one can listen to His own awful denunciations without perceiving that He traced their corruption to the false conceptions of God, and His covenant, and His law, which the teachers of the people had adopted, and were propagating. But whatever was the cause, the effect was certain. The nation was in a process of rapid internal decay. It was ceasing to feel itself a nation, the atoms of which it was composed were beginning continually to assert their independence of each other; for the idea of one Covenant, and one Father who was the Author of that Covenant, was more and more becoming lost; it could not co-exist with the feeling of the Pharisee, 'I thank God that I am not as other men are.'

3. It is of this loss of national cohesion and integrity, and not of some wrong done to individual priests, that the prophet speaks, I suspect,

when he says that his countrymen were robbing God of tithes and offerings. These he looked upon as witnesses that the whole land was God's land, as witnesses against the assumption that the mere proprietor had an absolute, indefeasible interest in the soil, as witnesses that he was a trustee for the good of his brethren, and that he held it from the Divine Owner upon the tenure *quamdiu se bene gesserit*; however inconvenient the rule might prove if human lawgivers strove with their weak and confused apprehensions to enforce it. The Levitical tribe existed out of the ordinary conditions of the tribes, on purpose, it would seem, to illustrate and embody this truth, that the portion of society to which the highest duties are assigned has a common inheritance, has least to do with the divisions of property. But those who when our Lord came in the flesh enforced the tithes of mint, anise, and cummin, had forgotten the meaning of the institution in the accidents of it. They were covetous, says the Evangelist; the individual application of the gift was the only one which they could understand, and therefore they insisted upon the divine right of property, whilst they neglected the weightier matters of the law—judgment, justice, and truth. They robbed God in the strictest sense, in the very sense which Malachi intended, though not in the form of tithes and offerings.

4. But how does the Prophet say that the great and final curse could be averted? What methods would the divine mercy use that it might



be averted? Elijah the Prophet—one in all essentials answering to him in character and office—would ‘turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and of the children to the fathers.’ All the evils which the Prophet had warned his countrymen of as sure presages of approaching ruin might be summed up in this one. If there was no fellowship in heart and spirit between the fathers and the children; if the elders of the land were feeling that they had one interest, and the youth of the land that they had altogether a different and opposite one; if the fathers were always dwelling in the corrupt present, or looking back to an imaginary past; if the children were always rejoicing in the present, just so far only as it was unlike the past, and were looking to a vague future which should be still more unlike it; then the elements of which the nation consisted were sure to be dissolved; the curse was near its completion. Such a state of things we may clearly trace in the time when John the Baptist appeared. The Pharisee threw himself back upon the recollection, ‘We have Abraham to our father;’ and made that recollection the excuse for doing any works but those of Abraham. The multitude in the bitterness of their sorrow sighed and cried for a great champion, or deliverer, who should lead them into the wilderness, who should break the yoke of the Herodian family, or of the Caesars, from off their necks. Each feared, suspected, hated the other, but the Pharisee, ever and anon, in his zeal for Judaism and his own authority,

plotted as much against the civil ruler as the wildest supporter of novelties; the passionate seekers of freedom and change, were as ready to use and pervert traditions in support of their schemes, as the most servile ritualist.

5. How little did the preaching, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,’ seem to meet either of these states of mind! How wonderfully it did meet both! The Scribe and Pharisee were busy with the rules, the letters, the formalities of past times. John the Baptist spoke at once to their consciences—to their very selves. He cut through the letter, the rule, the formality; but he got to the essential meaning of the past. He made mock of their boast to be Abraham’s children, but he asserted for them the very highest privilege which the children of Abraham could claim. He justified all their reverence for God’s Covenant in the very act of denouncing the exclusive, self-exalting use which they made of it. He set before them the blessing which God had promised in old times to their fathers, when he bade them believe that there was One among them whom they knew not, who would baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire. The poor oppressed Israelite, whom these Pharisees regarded as a man ignorant of the law, and therefore accursed, was busy with dreams of days when he should achieve independence, when the proud Gentile ruler, and probably when the prouder Jewish doctor, should be compelled to acknowledge him as an equal, if not as a master. To him, too, the stern preacher said, ‘Repent,



and be converted.' The sin and godlessness of the multitude He laid bare with the same sharp knife; no hint was given that their evil ways, if they persisted in them, would not be their ruin, because other men might have heavier guilt to answer for. But what visions had ever dawned upon their fancy which approached this which John called up before them, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand?' The Righteous King, the Judge of the whole earth, is even now with you. He is come to you poor men in your own poverty. He is come to know for Himself, in Himself, the depth of your sorrow and degradation. He is come to assert and to prove, by acts of righteous mercy and righteous vengeance, that Truth and Love are the eternal foundations upon which His Father has built His universe, and that, whatever powers of earth and hell are leagued against them, shall be put down. Was not this to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, since it told the fathers that they could not be faithful to the past, unless they hoped for the future? Was it not turning the hearts of the children to the fathers, since it told the children that they could not forget the promises which God had made of old without losing all that they were hoping for in the age to come?

Brethren, when we read the Commination Service, and think how many centuries it has sounded in the ears of Englishmen, let not that recollection persuade us that its words have wasted their power, that experience has proved

them vain. Men in the sixteenth century were told that God would visit the earth with a curse, if priests, and landlords, and tradesmen, and mechanics, did not turn from their evil courses, and remember God's covenant with them. As you read of the crimes of that age, and their effects, do you not feel that they wanted the admonition? Men in the seventeenth century, say in the age of Charles the Second, were told that God was a God of judgment, and that sin in high places, or in low, would have death for its wages. Was it an idle and obsolete tale for them? The eighteenth century, with all its philosophy, was still spoken to of those who swore falsely and oppressed the hireling in his wages. Were these words in churches all that spoke in that day of God's fixed and unchangeable order, of His fixed and unchangeable determination to assert it? Were there no thunders, no lightnings, no fire coming forth out of the mountain, which proclaimed to each generation—which proclaimed most loudly to that one—'These things are so; no layman, no priest, can set them aside. Heaven and earth may pass away, but these belong to God's own mind and nature; they cannot pass away?'

And is, then, the warning not wanted for us? If we think it is not, our state is indeed perilous. And it is that which, more than anything else, should make us tremble. We find it so hard, so very hard, to believe that our sins are the very same sins which we read of in books, the very same which have led other nations to actual



destruction, and have often brought our own to the brink of it. We give these sins other names; they come in as necessary parts of our scheme of the universe. To use every low art for the sake of making ourselves appear something else than we are, or of making our brethren appear more black than they are, is not lying; it is only the natural wish in each man to look well in the eyes of his fellows, or the earnestness and zeal of a man strongly impressed with a conviction to check the dangerous tendencies of his opponents. To give those who slave for us that which is not enough to preserve them from starvation or crime; to treat them as if they were machines, and not human beings; this is not oppression; it is the law of competition, which no one has a right to violate, so sacred and venerable a power is it. Oh, it is this satisfaction with the world's abominations, this quick discovery of some solution which is quite adequate for every one, and which is a warrant for leaving it undisturbed—this, this is the curse of our time, which should make every one of us fear lest the curse of all curses should be coming upon us; the utter disbelief in God as our Lord, the impression that the devil has gotten the victory, and has established for ever his supremacy. Such a curse may befall a country where there is the loudest religious profession—perhaps has never fallen in its fulness upon any other. Where the Name of God is pronounced so continually by lips which can pour forth falsehoods against those who are made in His image, where religious arguments are used to

convince us that we should be content with acts and measures which our consciences declare to be unrighteous; where adherence to party with all its incredible meannesses, compromises, and falsehoods, is declared to be the selfsame thing as adherence to principle; where religious duties are performed without any evidence being given that they have the least influence upon the common duties of human beings, to each other; then surely godlessness, yes, and Atheism will be waxing stronger and stronger, and will be ready to come forth in a more portentous form than it could take in a country where holy names had been less familiarly trifled with and profaned.

And then especially will that fatal symptom be seen: the fathers will be turned from the children, the children from the fathers. Need I speak of this symptom as it appears at this time among ourselves? Need I dwell upon the coldness and estrangement which there is between the most earnest of the youth of our land and those from whom they have received their earliest lore? Or again, what suspicion there is in the elders of all their acts and words? Need I say what a strong plea each has for his complaint of the other? How much the one seem to wrap themselves up in phrases which are not able to keep them warm because the substance is gone out of them? How little they are able to give equivalents for these phrases, and so to prove that they have a reality? How readily they identify the defence of God's law with the defence of man's abuses? How they



seem to think that one cannot stand without the other? How little faith they shew in the power of God's Gospel and God's truth, of which they speak so frequently? How much stronger they believe human depravity and the devil's influence to be than either? And on the other hand, who can say that the young men are not, as their censors affirm, following the imaginations of their own hearts, are not pursuing phantoms and will-of-the-wisps, which lead them to nothing; are not adopting a cant of their own, which is at least as unreal as that which they abandon; are not giving up armour that has stood the proof, for armour that will utterly fail them in the day of battle; are not dreaming of a deliverance which by their methods they can never attain!

But there is One who can turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and of the children to their fathers; who can give repentance and conversion to both; who can restore to the old in all its strength, that which they are grasping so feebly, and can give the young far more than all which they are so impatiently and with so little hope striving for. If the fathers are taught that God's covenant is truth and no lie, that God indeed has established His family upon earth, and that he will maintain it, they must as earnestly as their children begin to desire a better day than that which they see; a real coming of God's kingdom with power. If the children are taught what freedom is, what slavery is, what the highest good of man is, what his greatest curse,

they will find that they can only shake off the yoke of their tyrants, and enter into the good land by submitting themselves to His guidance who has promised that He will give it to them and to their seed after them. As we confess our sins this Lent, and especially as we desire that the priest's lips may be purged and may speak true knowledge, let us seek this blessing above all others. And though we for our murmuring and unbelief may die in the wilderness, though we may still only see afar off the city of our God builded as a city which is compact together, and all the brethren who inhabit it dwelling together in unity, yet God will not fail of his word, and our children may yet rest in that quiet habitation, in the tabernacle which shall not be taken down.

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